A YEAR WITH VINCENT VAN GOGH

By

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Dedicated To

FORGOTTEN ARTISTS

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INTRODUCTION

In 2017 I spent a year studying Vincent Van Gogh. And as well as creating a bust of Vincent I painted 67 oil paintings. And here is Vincent's story, my story and I hope a story that speaks to you.

Van Gogh's work is not just his paintings but also his writings. His story. This book will tell that story and the tragic beauty it can still show us.

Van Gogh has also helped me to find my own "voice", the style in which you tell your story. The hardest thing for an artist to do is to find a new style. I used the last years of Vincent's late 19th century life to compare with the life of an early 21st century artist (my own). I used Vincent to help me to address my Mid-Life Crisis – which I believe parallels the crisis our world is now facing.

Vincent was a "heroic" artist questing for beauty through truth and truth through beauty. That artist is now disassociated from modern live and is superficial – but is still represents a source of hope– despite the futility of that hope. There are a number of aspects of Van Gogh's life that I identify with, though I don't see my work as equal to the genius of his work, I just hope to make an interesting and beautiful comment on it. I believe that Van Gogh's work has helped me to see the world and nature in a fresh way to deepen and enrich my life.

Vincent had a spiritual belief that affirmed life and nature. His work appeals because of its spiritual vision of a nature. There is a positive harmony of mankind and nature that is created through a rhythm of unified brush-strokes. I tried for many years to convey religious messages about art. Van Gogh had worked as a preacher before becoming and artist and I was "preaching" and no one was listening. I'd worked restoring churches in Israel and Palestine, then had created art about different faiths and been an activist for art employment rights. This art had fallen on deaf ears. And then I found, after spending a year studying the work of Vincent Van Gogh, that my most effective sermons were just through beautiful art.

As I got older I became more interested in family history and empathise with the lives of other generations. Then, whilst on holiday, I visited the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam where there were no sculptures of Vincent. With so many different looking paintings of Vincent I wanted the challenge of combining the images to create the closest image of him that I could.

To research Van Gogh I read books on his life, his letters to his brother and friends and watched documentaries and films of his life. He painted an oil painting a day. So I thought that the best way to get an insight into his life was to create lots of works. There

was no point just copying them, so I decided to re-imagine them from my own 21st century perspective and aimed at a more modest one painting a week as I was also working part-time as a Swing dance teacher.

I translated Vincent's images into ones from my own life, to connect back to him, to show my own personality – and to acknowledge that we all exist in the shadow of these historic figures. But that is the content, the subject matter, of my painting. I was also trying to provide an original style.

Van Gogh had created a unique Post-Impressionist style of brushstroke made up of expressive lines. In my tribute to him I didn't want to copy his work but to create a new style, my own style. I took his style and changed it into a different shape and size of expressive brush-strokes. So I worked with the shape of the large flat paint brush and a square shape was the result.

The Post-Impressionists Paul Signac, Andre Derain, Henri Edmond Cross, Georges Seurat and the Divisionists used small dots, squares and rectangles to create an appearance of a scene when viewed from a distance. My work is also a development on Tachisme - a term given to the work of Claude–Emile Schffenecker who had a period of slightly more expressive, rectangular, broader painting style than Pointillism. The dots merge into various shapes and colours. But these are quite mechanically constructed and are not applied as expressive shapes. They are also applied in a flat plane, like an analogue television screen, and create an illusion of perspective. My work makes a more pixellated yet expressive brush strokes and as a sculptor I loved to use the paint in a sculptural manner, as if creating space in the flat picture frame. At its most effective my perspective strokes make you feel like you are rushing headlong into the work of art.

When viewed close-up the Divisionist's work is seen as flat dots. From a distance it has perspective and depth. I also wanted to create a contrast in flat shapes close up, and depth of perspective objects at a distance, but at mid range you see a mix of the two. And like Van Gogh's work, mine also had outlines to objects, something lacking in the Divisionist work. This technique is called Cloisonnisme. It is the creating of an outline and then filling it with colour. It gives a appearance a little like stained-glass and separated Van Gogh's work from that of the Impressionists.

There is a tension between the flat outline shapes and the sculpted brush-strokes. This is overcome by using broader outlines in parts of the perspective scene that are closer to the viewer and thinner lines further away. When I used the large flat brushes the creation of detail was nearly impossible. I never used small brushes, rather I used the corners of the large brushes to create dots and dabs. And their end edges to create lines for the contours of shapes. These are all part of the expressive vocabulary of the basic square brush stroke.

Van Gogh was also impressed with Japanese style painting. This had a flat surface with outlines and areas divided into colour. People and animals were created with simple brush strokes and the movement in the brushwork gave life to the objects.

I studied Chinese painting which has simple big brush strokes for close up people and objects. And thin outlines with areas awash with colour for distant background, e.g. mountains. In contrast Van Gogh used outlines with filled areas of brush stokes close up and areas of brush stokes in the distance. And so when Van Gogh created out of simple brush strokes figures and objects mid-painting these are the most Oriental in his style of work. I follow this formula.

My general method of painting was to draw then paint the outlines. Nearer lines are thicker and distant ones are thinner. Distant objects are created out of Chinese style simple lines or brushstrokes. Closer objects are created with outlines filled with brushstrokes. Then I painted the background, then the foreground and objects. I used Impasto, the thick application of paint to give a texture and sculptural quality to the work so that the brush marks also have their own identity and reality.

To increase a sense of perspective the flat brush strokes are closer together on the horizon and are made along lines to a vanishing point – whilst keeping the brush level with the horizon. To create more depth in the scene the brush-strokes are horizontal in the background, vertical in the foreground. The background is made of flat brush-strokes (as in the sky or the wall behind a still life vase of flowers). The downward stroke of the brush for the background also conveys a sense of gravity that the brushstrokes of plant and people can move with or against creating a strangely foreboding harmony or dramatic tension within the work). Objects are given a sculptural solidity by brushwork. And the scene in which they sit recedes in a perspective brush-stroke manner (as in clouds and landscape or the table a vase sits upon). There can also be multiple perspective points, e.g. if the sun is shining then this source of light functions like a source of perspective with radiating lines from the centre.

I tried in the 67 works to give a full combination of the style, whilst settling for the one I think is the most effective. So, for example, there are combinations of outline or no outline, colour fill or expressive brush-strokes. With a background the brushwork can be flat, radiate out of an object, or travel around the object. Again the brushwork on the actual object can sculpturally follow its shape or be flat.

I kept my colour palette simple as I wanted bold, vibrant colours like those used in Van Gogh's work. I avoided over mixing the colours, and wanted to create a standard colour style of my own. Some of the colours included Cadmium Red and Yellow, Lemon Yellow, Ultramarine Blue, Viridian Green, Titanium White, Burnt Umber, Burnt Sienna and Yellow Ochre. I also avoided using black as it can "middy" the colours. Instead I created it by juxtaposing a Brown and Blue. And for shadows I often used a dark blue and outlined the shadow area.

Vincent signed many of his works just "Vincent" in part because he said people struggled to pronounce his second name. I have signed mine "Anthony".

Anthony David Padgett - March 2018

A YEAR WITH VINCENT VAN GOGH

THE PAINTINGS *1-67*

1. PARIS – STUDIES (1886 – 1888) *1-11*

Vincent Van Gogh was born in Holland in 1853, a year to the day that his older brother, also called Vincent, died at birth. His father was a minister and his uncles worked as artists and art dealers. He worked as an art dealer for the firm (part set up by his uncles) of Goupil & Cie in their offices in Paris, the Hague and London. Next he spent time as an evangelist in London and, for a longer period, in the Belgian region of the Borinage he worked with impoverished miners. It was then that Vincent began drawing frequently and the painting came later. He studied in The Hague, Brussels and Antwerp. And after returning to his family home he decided to move to Paris in 1886 to be with his younger brother Theo (who now worked as an art dealer with Goupil & Cie) and to find other artistic influences. In Paris Vincent met and learned from other artists.

I had been an artist for over 20 years. I had worked, studied a Master, lived and exhibited in London but moved out as it was too expensive and not rural enough. In 2017 I attended oil painting classes under Chris McLoughlin (who had studied at the Royal Academy of fine Art in Antwerp). I had never worked in oils before and Chris showed me the benefits of creating work with large expressive brushwork. His own work being primarily abstract landscapes made from long marks.

2. ARLES – NATURE (1888 – 1889) *12-42*

Vincent's love of Japanese style and of nature led to his wish to escape the less healthy Parisian life and to paint in a warmer, sunny and rural location. He moved to the South of France in 1888 and his ambition was to set up an Artists' Colony. I was already living in Hutton, a sub-urban village in the rural area of South Ribble. The Ribble being a river that runs through Lancashire and the nearby city of Preston. The area, from Hutton to Southport, is agricultural and I had not fully explored this area.

BLOSSOM *12-14*

Vincent began to paint the blossom of the trees in Japanese style. It was a form of heaven for Van Gogh.

ARTIST GOES TO WORK *15-18*

He arrived in Arles and his materials were sent down from Paris. It was Vincent's work that led to my exploration of place and self.

RAPESEED *19-24*

Van Gogh is associated with sunflowers which symbolise the sun. They are a crop plant that is grown around Arles. In the area where I live the crop plant is rapeseed and just like sunflowers were not the traditional subject of 19th century art it is the same with rapeseed in the 21st century. For me the rapeseed flower, like the sunflower, is symbolic of a human soul. Vincent and I assert the value of each individual, even as part of a massive field. However, the rapeseed flower is one flower made of many small flowers or is many flowers together on one branch, like our divided modern selves. It is this flower that helped me address my mid-life Crisis. I saw the fields full and could see beauty in the cycle of life but I still wondered where is the extra meaning to it all, the meaning we achieve or reach before death.

LOCAL LIFE *25-33*

Many people in Arles regarded Van Gogh with suspicion. He was a Dutch artist whose work was strange and experimental. Why had he moved from Paris to this small town in rural France. And Vincent felt that because he was an outsider his landlord had overcharged him on his room rent. However, he was happy in Arles and had a number of good friends in the town and wanted to set up an artists' colony with artist friends from the North of France. And so he moved to rent his own house, the Yellow House. In the summer of 2017 I visited Arles with my partner Stephanie in a kind of pilgrimage to Vincent. And so a number of my works are modern views of Vincent's scenes in Arles and Saint Remy.

YELLOW HOUSE *34-42*

The Yellow House was a key location for Vincent's artistic production and Paul Gauguin was to be the first and last guest artist to join Vincent's Artist Colony. But his striving for an artists' utopia returns me to my mid-life-crisis question - there is beauty in the cycle of nature, of life and death but where is the extra meaning before death. Can art give this.

3. ST. REMY - SANATORIUM (1889 – 1890) *43-54*

Vincent agreed to go away to a nearby sanatorium about 20 miles north of Arles. Just outside the town of Saint Remy is the Saint Paul Sanatorium. Vincent had suffered a breakdown and his style became freer as a result.

4. AUVERS – CYCLES OF NATURE (1890) *55-67*

Vincent was recovering from his breakdown and had a free painting style. Eventually he was ready to return to society. Vincent went to Auvers sur Oise in the north of France to continue working. There he was to be under the supervision of Dr Gachet. Vincent didn't have much faith in his medicine. My own crisis point had not been fully reached. Though I was starting to connect with the cycle of life and death my own Mid-Life-Crisis question had not yet been answered. Was there any extra meaning to the beauty of nature's cycle of life and death.

1. Vincent often wrote to his brother. Theo. This is my brother, Philip. So, dear brother, after a year with Vincent, what did I learn?

A Portrait by Anthony of his brother, Philip after Theo by Vincent, 2017
by Anthony D. Padgett (after Van Gogh c.1880)

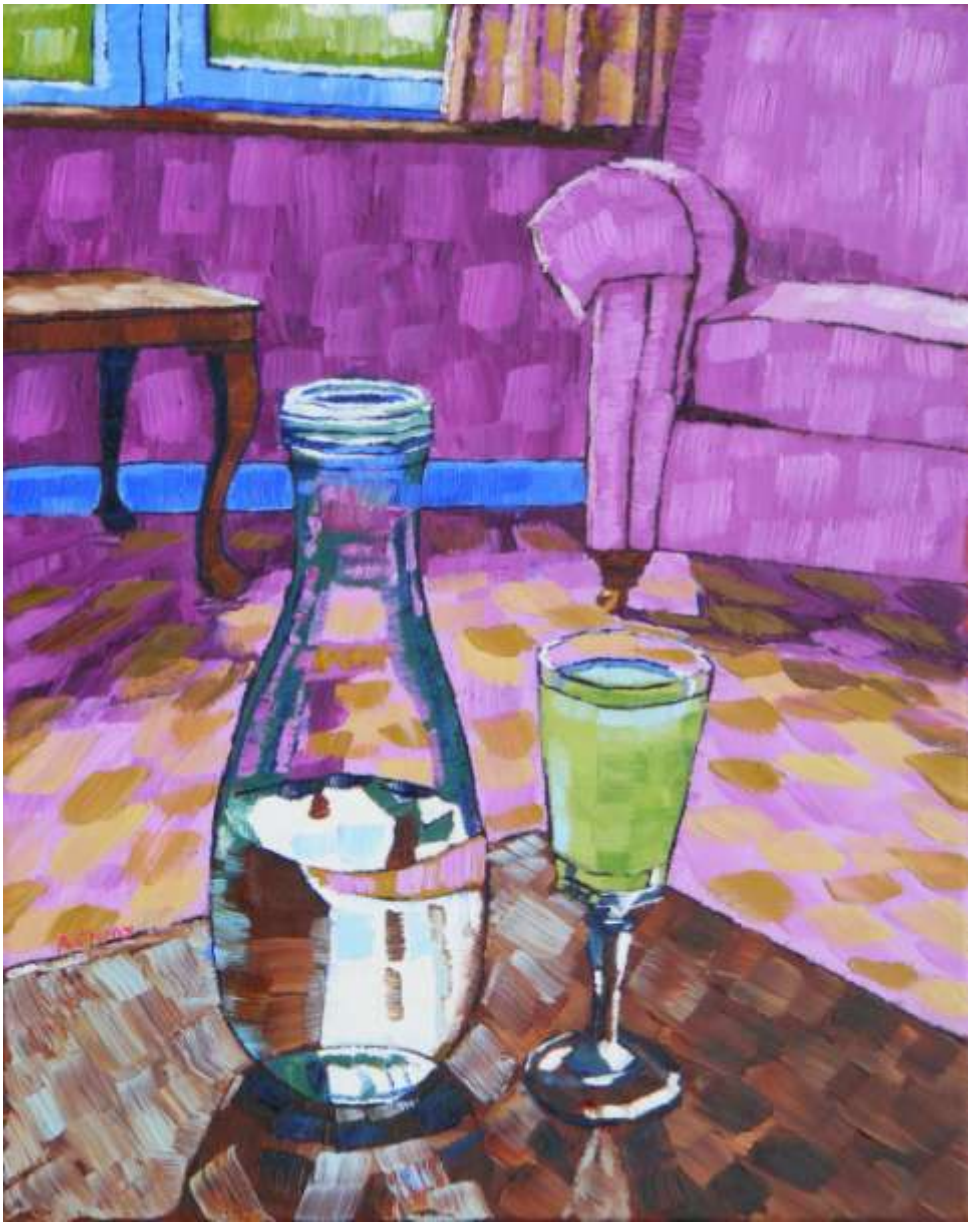
Vincent created very few images of his brother Theo, an art dealer with Goupill & Cie. He was a very important figure to Vincent and encouraged him to paint in oils and supported him financially. Vincent wrote many letters to Theo and these are part of why the public came to love his work. My brother Philip is a trader in antiques and has bought my sculpture and often has asked to commission a painting from me.

2. We all have places like Vincent saw. He painted windmills in Paris and this is Lytham, in the North West of England.

Lytham Windmill after Le Moulin de la Galette 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh Paris 1886)

Vincent lived in the Montmarte region of Paris where there were many other artists. There were a number of windmills in Paris in the 1880s and Vincent painted many, perhaps in a connection to his Dutch origins. I live in the village of Hutton, near Preston, in Lancashire, England. My windmill is from the pretty coastal town of Lytham, a place that I would walk with my partner. The clouds and ground are created with perspective brushwork and give a sense of sun trying to break through. The viridian greens show the damp ground as the white light breaks through the grey clouds.

3. Vincent developed his painting skills in Paris. He socialised with other painters and drank Absinthe.



Still Life with Absinthe 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett (after Van Gogh Paris 1887)

Absinthe was a popular drink with artists in Paris. It is 70% alcohol and was watered down. It has an aniseed flavour and goes green when mixed with water. Vincent's painting is inside a Parisian café whereas I am in the lounge of my partner's house in Hutton. The carafe and the vibrant green liquid in the glass are created with simple marks and there are purple complimentary colours on the floor. I don't know many artists nor go out drinking much, just share a bottle of wine with my partner once a week whilst in the garden, admiring the view over agricultural fields, or indoors watching television.

4. I studied painting technique and needed to express myself, in my own way.

Still Life Pink Roses in a Vase 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh Saint Remy 1890)

Vincent practiced his painting skills in Paris. He painted many still-life pictures and though he is associated with the Sunflowers he painted many kinds of flower. I wanted to find a flower distinctive to my own artistic practice and tried first with roses in my broad brush stroke. The light pink stands out from the dark red with the greens breaking up the fullness. The flat background pushes the vase and flowers forwards.

5. We all have our own favourite flowers. I painted flowers but I hadn't found my own flower.

Daffodils after Still Life Vase with Fourteen Sunflowers 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett (after Van Gogh Arles 1888)

With the daffodils brilliant cadmium yellow stands out from the ultramarine blue. The flat background emphasises the three dimensional shape of the vase and flowers. Petals created from simple brush strokes away from the centre of the flowers give them life. It was later that I would find my own distinctive flower to mirror Vincent's Sunflower.

6. Vincent painted statuettes to help with his skills. Here I use a statuette in my lounge to develop my broad brush work.

Plaster Statuette of a Horse 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett (after Van Gogh Paris 1886)

Vincent had practiced painting figures under his cousin Mauve (a well know artist in the Hague). In Paris he also painted a study of a horse. My horse painting is also an example of complimentary colours, of red, greens, blues and yellows. This was a vibrant technique of the Impressionists that Vincent experimented with in Paris. It is where the opposite colour is painted as an under-layer and then the actual colour is painted on top, e.g. if the scene is green then paint it red before painting over it in green. Instead of waiting for the under layer to dry I would paint wet on wet, tricky to do to avoid the colours mixing.

7. He worked as an art dealer, a teacher and an evangelist before becoming an artist.

Self Portrait of Vincent Van Gogh Paris 1887 by Anthony D.Padgett 2017

In Paris Vincent was short of life-models who were expensive to hire. As a result he experimented with style as he painted a large number of self-portraits in Paris. I used these in creating a bust of Vincent because whilst the self-portraits created in Paris are not Vincent's most famous but are possibly the most accurate. Later portraits were influenced both by his altered mental state and by Paul Gauguin's encouragement for Vincent to use his imagination more. The Paris paintings show the most consistency over size, shape and relative placement of nose, lips, eyes, ears, beard, hair-line head, cheekbones, chin.

8. I worked as an art conservator, a teacher of religion and dance.

Self Portrait 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett after Van Gogh Paris 1887

My own self-portrait has concentric contours in the background which create a tunnel effect and mirror another of Vincent's self-portraits. In this early work I am still finding my own style.

9. Vincent painted himself many times and I use his image to develop my own brush work style.

Self Portrait in Front of the Easel of Vincent Van Gogh Paris 1888
by Anthony D. Padgett 2017

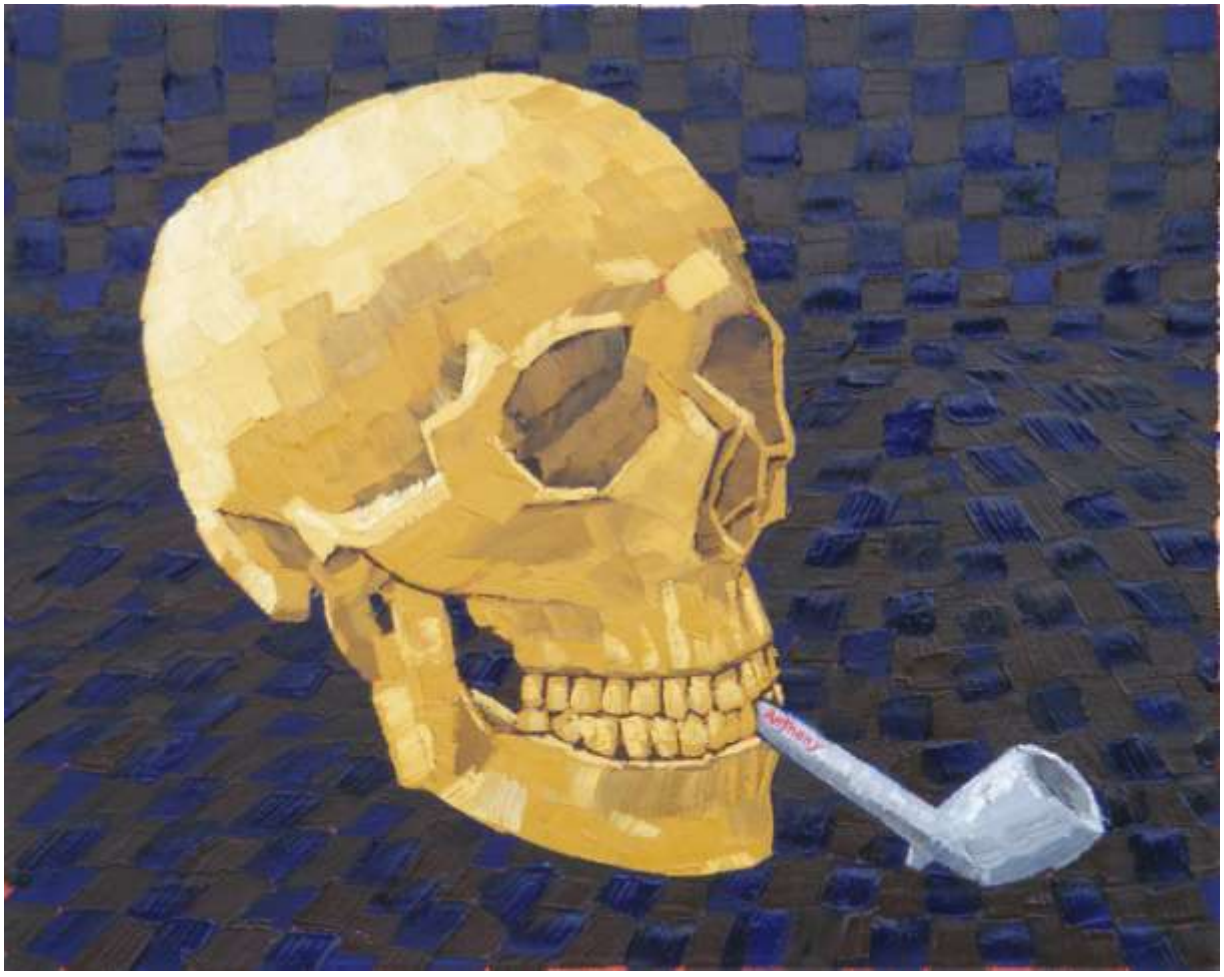
The bright orange brush-work shows the vibrancy of Vincent's beard and hair. These three paintings are the first paintings that I made on the theme of Vincent Van Gogh. In them I establish that my style a flat background and contoured broad brush strokes is a distinct style. The squares follow the shape of Vincent's tunic and the limits of the style are found with the flat brush-strokes broken up in order to create the details of the face. The flat tip of the brush is also used to paint the thin brushes.

10. He was friends with the art supplier Pere Tanguy and was influenced by Japanese art and this was my Chinese art tutor with my paintings behind her.

Portrait of My Chinese Painting Tutor after Pere Tanguy 2017
by Anthony D. Padgett (after Van Gogh Paris 1887)

Pere Tanguy was an arts materials supplier and a great supporter of the Post-Impressionists. Behind him are Japanese prints on the wall and Vincent was influenced by this Oriental style. Here Vincent got tubes of oil paints (a new invention that allowed artists to work outdoors). I learned Mandarin Chinese for a number of years and studied Chinese Painting making shapes using simple brush strokes. I wanted to get simplicity of brush work in my paintings. Behind my tutor Xiaolin Ji are paintings I made. I use a small brush to re-paint them as they would have been impossible with the broad brush.

11. Vincent's studies included a skeleton smoking and here I painted a skull of Vincent, smoking a pipe.



Skull with Pipe 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Skull with Burning Cigarette by Van Gogh Antwerp 1885)

Another of Vincent's still life studies is a whimsically sardonic skull smoking a cigarette. Here I have a plastic anatomical skull with a pipe. I used this skull to help with making my bust of Vincent and my painting of a skull alludes to the deceased Vincent and also to my own mortality. The skull is made from contoured brush work and the background is thick squares of blue and brown, receding to a horizon line. From a distance the two colours combine in the eye to make black. Vincent smoked many pipes and I visited the Amsterdam Pipe Museum to discuss these with the Curator of an exhibition on Vincent pipes. This led to my creating a collection of Vincent's style of pipes.

12. Van Gogh moved to the South of France to find a Japanese style paradise of sunlight and nature. Here is a blossoming tree in my nearby town of Southport.

Peach Tree in Blossom 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett (after Van Gogh Arles 1888)

The peach blossom trees showed the joy that Vincent had in arriving in Arles. My own is from Southport Botanical Gardens. I tried to paint in a Chinese style of quick expression and used broad brushwork for the whole painting. I experimented with using the long tip of the brush for blossom. This created a wide line and showed one of the limitations of the style. Flowers in my later work are made from points on the edge of the brush.

13. He later remembered this period when mentally ill and painted blossom branches.

Blossoming Almond Tree 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh Saint Remy 1890)

The blossoming Almond Tree, one of Vincent's best loved works, was painted over a year later at Saint Remy but I've included it in this earlier phase as it makes a series of three blossom trees. My branches are from a tree by the roadside in the sub-urban village of Penwortham. I do not know the species of tree. The delicacy of the branches and petals show that I needed to use the brush in different ways, not just to make broad marks. To overcome this limitation the style requires a combination of broad marks and smaller marks, though all made with the same size 10 brushes. My painting has faint squares in the background.

14. Beautiful blossom twigs were put in a jar.

Blossoming Almond Branch in a Glass 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh Arles 1888)

I broke this branch from the Penwortham tree and placed it into a jar. The broad-brush work shows different planes of direction. It also helps create an effect of front and back of the glass. The flowers are created using a similar set of brush marks as used in smaller petals, stems and branches. The blue and pink compliment each other and the outlined shadows are a darker blue. The jar sat on our dining table and I enjoyed the beauty of the spring blossom, its delicate stamens and its falling petals.

15. Vincent wore a straw hat to work in the open air.

Self Portrait with Straw Hat 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh Paris 1887)

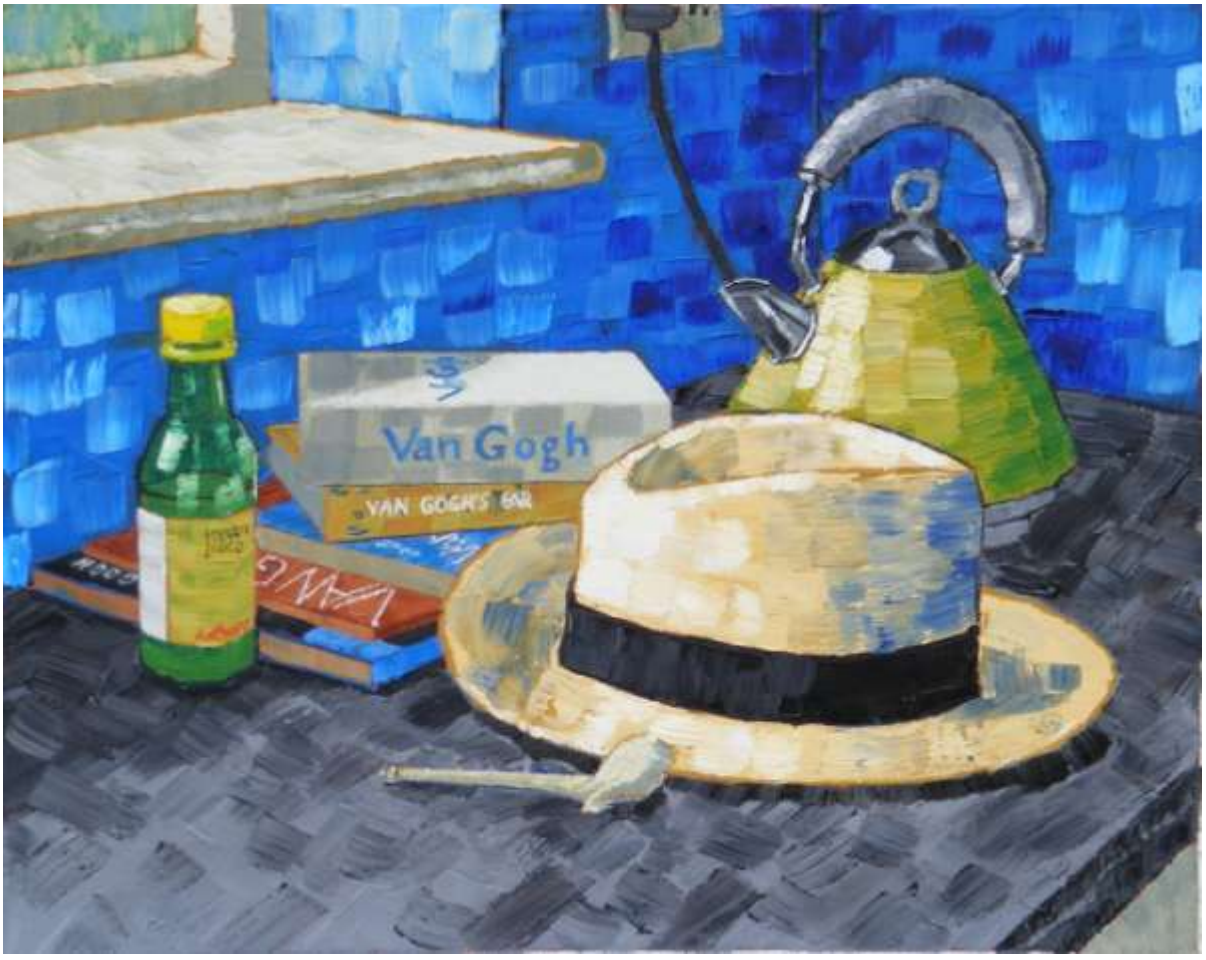
Van Gogh wore straw hats when walking and painting in the sun. But the weather in South Ribble does not permit this. He used the latest perspective frames of the day. And similar to these I created a grid on my photographs and canvases. I wore a straw hat after driving to locations similar to those in his work. I walked from my car to take the photographs. His self portrait in a straw hat includes small marks in the background and I've tried to reproduce a similar effect but in my own style.

16. I wore my straw hat when finding local places that looked like his paintings.

The Painter on His Way to Work 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh Arles 1888)

Vincent's painting shows him carrying his easel and paints. I would carry a camera and a book with an image of Vincent's work. I would find a place, here a lane at Holmeswood, and then photograph the location. I'd then work from the photo back in my studio. I can draw direct from life but using photographs was faster and allowed me to concentrate on the more important elements of line, brushwork and simplified forms. Use of photographs also shows the production of art in the twenty first century as commercial and mechanical yet trying to reach beyond this. My painted face shows the difficulty of using lines and brushwork, and of detailed and simple broad brush marks. This was more difficult with the face being in shadow.

17. Vincent's earlier still life studies were dark and rural, mine are light and sub-urban.



Still Life with Yellow Straw Hat 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh Nuenen 1885)

This still life is from an early period of Vincent's work in Nuenen 1885. The vegetables and rural utensils are replaced with a middle class electric kettle and lemon juice to add to glasses of boiling water – a favourite drink of my partner Stephanie. My straw hat is the one I wore but the clay pipe is one of many that I was collecting for the base of the Van Gogh bust. The pile of books shows some of the sources that I used to find Vincent's many paintings. They include the complete collection of Van Gogh's paintings and also "Van Gogh's Ear" by Bernadette Murphy, who we later met when we travelled to Arles.

18. He often painted his worn out boots and his shoes. Here are my daytime shoes and my dancing shoes.

A Pair of Shoes 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh Arles 1888)

Vincent painted many pairs of worn boots and shoes. In contrast, my shoes are light and not as heavily worn. The shoes, on our kitchen floor, show that whilst working as an artist I also worked at night as a swing dance teacher. The dance shoes are painted completely in blue that looks almost black next to the earthy brown everyday walking shoes. Sometimes the broad brush-strokes are submerged by the realism of the outlines and contours. In this case I have used the flat edge of the brush to give angular outlines.

19. Van Gogh painted wheat fields in Paris but in a similar scene I found my flower, the golden rapeseed, in the fields around Sollom.

Rapeseed after Wheatfield With Lark 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh Paris 1887)

In spring, in the fields around Sollom and Tarleton, there is a huge crop of Rapeseed. To paint the edge of the field it was impossible to use the broad-brush stroke for the stalks of the rapeseed and the blades of grass. The technique was to use the thin edge of the broad brush. After creating the blossom tree I was now able to move to petals and flowers being single points of paint made using the corner of the brush to. Vincent's painting "Wheat Field With a Lark" was done in Paris but his full exploration of nature was in Arles.

20. The beauty when we are in the summer of life is overwhelming.

Rapeseed after Wheatfield 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh Arles 1888)

The fields of yellow stretch to the horizon. And it is here that I found my own sunflower. A golden sun incarnate in the fields. Yet not the sunflower but the rapeseed flower. Or rather the rapeseed flowers as each head is a bouquet of between five and twenty small blossom flowers. With this distant view each head can be represented by a simple brush stroke in glorious cadmium yellow. I varied the colour of the sky depending on the position of the sun and the amount of dust in the atmosphere.

21. Vincent's old man in sorrow is from his later life. Here, surrounded by flowers, I have hope.

Middle-Aged Man in Rapeseed after Old Man In Sorrow 2017
by Anthony D. Padgett (after Van Gogh Saint Remy 1890)

The fields are inviting yet forbidding. You respect them as a farmer's crop and yet you want to envelop yourself in their golden hue. Vincent painted "Old Man in Sorrow" in Saint Remy in a later period of overcoming mental illness. My own self portrait is of a Middle-Aged Man in Rapeseed. I am in the pose of Rodin's Thinker, and am on a journey that seems to be taking me forward. It is an optimistic vision. The narrow brush marks mix with the broader brush strokes, a joining of the style of thin edge and flat brushwork to create an overall effect of being surrounded with positive feeling.

22. The Sunflower is alone. The Rapeseed is complex.

Rapeseed after Garden with Sunflower 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh Arles 1888)

The plant has many flowers, many faces, and yet stands as a lone plant, a symbolic person in a field of humanity. Its beauty is individual and yet also as part of that whole. Each brush stroke has a beauty and is also part of a whole painting. It grows fast and also spreads, almost like a weed. Yet it has a very temporary life, with a couple of crops a year being grown. Not a glamorous flower and yet it has a beauty and a nature all its own.

23. Sitting in a vase are many Sunflowers. The Rapeseed flower is made of many flowers.

Rapeseed after Still Life Vase with Fourteen Sunflowers 2017
by Anthony D. Padgett (after Van Gogh Arles 1888)

Here is my true version of Van Gogh's sunflowers. After painting the plants in the fields I moved on to paint the complexity of the rapeseed. The pastel colours and the lightness of the stalks and heads contrast with the heavy marks and primary colours of Van Gogh's sunflowers. This reflects the difference in seriousness between us.

24. Two Sunflowers symbolised Vincent's relationship with his brother. My flowers show my relationship to my life partner, Stephanie.

Rapeseed after Two Cut Sunflowers 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh Paris 1887)

Vincent was already painting sunflowers in Paris. These two sunflowers, like two persons lying down, perhaps reflected his relationships with brother or lover. My rapeseed flowers could similarly reflect my relationship with my partner Stephanie. The work is a detailed analysis of the structure of the flower whilst maintaining my style. The solidity of the flowers and their yellow petals contrasts against the flat white, blue and yellow brush work of the background. This background is like the sky and only the shadows of the flowers stop them from free floating.

25. Sitting by the canal I felt there was something missing in my life. I was getting old – facing a mid-life-crisis.

Tarleton Canal after the Langlois Bridge at Arles 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett (after Van Gogh Arles 1888)

At the Langlois Bridge in Arles ladies would wash laundry. I am sitting by a canal lock at Tarleton an area that once was used for the transportation of farm produce by barge. I think wistfully about a lost era of agricultural production. The reflections of the bridge are captured in the darker water. The simple outlines and brush work of the figure show a harmony between two elements. It situates the figure as an integral part of the scene, at one with its still beauty. Yet I was looking for something deeper.

26. I have replaced Les Alyscamps avenue, in Arles, with Avenham Park in Preston.

Avenham Park after Les Alyscamps 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh Arles 1888)

Les Alyscamps is a tree lined avenue in Arles. And Avenham Park in Preston has a similar avenue, beside a river. Sunday walkers stroll, and cyclists ride in this once grand Victorian Park. The scene is in winter and the trees have no leaves. They are very angular being made of simple brush marks. The brush strokes are quite lifeless and the dark colours express the drabness of the day.

27. He painted active boats in Saintes Maries, but the boats in Lancashire are resting and decaying.

Fishing Boats on the Beach at Lytham after those at Saintes Maries 2017
by Anthony D. Padgett (after Van Gogh Arles 1888))

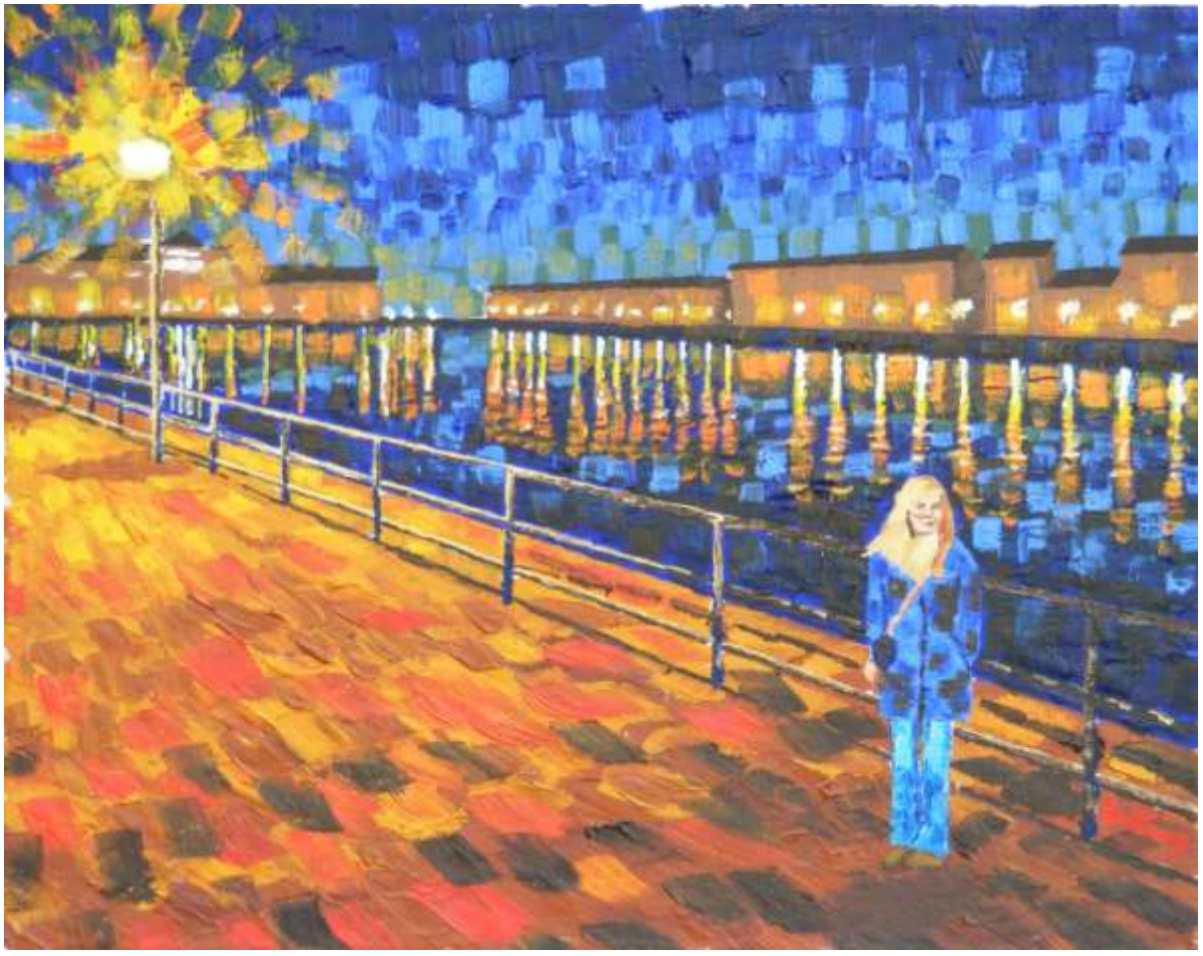
Vincent travelled South to Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer and painted boats by the sea. My scene is of deserted boats on Lytham beach, travelling along the promenade, north from its windmill. The burnt sienna of the background canvas colour is showing through the marks. The distance is flat and the near beach is contoured around to meet us. More expressive and slightly larger marks show the sandy grass in the foreground. We also travelled to Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer when visiting Provence. Vincent's fishing boats had been replaced with Yachts in secluded Marinas, and the beaches were full of swimming tourists. On leaving many local gypsies got on the bus. They were quite wild and we felt threatened. Yet Vincent had befriended and painted the ancestors of these people. Showing his fearless love of people of all kinds. We got off the bus after the gypsies and then walked back to near their camp, where there was a field full of dried up sunflowers. I picked some of these for my sculpture of Vincent.

28. My partner, Stephanie, a beautiful lady, is holding the flower of youth.

Stephanie Sitting after La Mousme, 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh Arles 1888)

La Mousme was a girl who lived in Arles but not much is known about her. My partner, Stephanie, is a University senior lecturer in Leadership and a life coach. She loves nature and we walk, dance and live together. She is a happy and helpful person who always thinks good of others. Her polka dot dress has become squares which follow the contours of her dress. The dress stands out against her skin and the chaise longue. The work is created with love and I worried that the style might not be able to capture her beauty. Her face has tension between brush strokes and contour lines. The pressure of her work is great, she is growing older, and she loves flowers in the house.

29. We walk around Preston docks and Van Gogh's stars are obscured by electric lights.



Preston Docks after Starry Night Over the Rhone 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett (after Van Gogh, Arles 1888)

Once a week we go shopping at a supermarket in Preston and walk around the gentrified industrial docks. I was struck how this scene was reminiscent of Vincent's Starry Night Over the Rhone. The Rhone is the river that flows through Arles and Vincent's view was painted near to his Yellow House. Yet in my work the lamp radiates out like an electric sun and the electric lights have replaced the stars and the flowing river is replaced with waters that are now unused by boats. In this work I've used varying sizes of brush-stroke to increase the sense of depth. It does this well but removes the sense of flatness and makes the work more literal. The sky, the water and Stephanie are made of the same size brushwork and the foreground is a larger brush. The elongated reflections of light make the dock look deep but the ripples return the viewer to the fact that it is a reflection. Stephanie as a smaller brush size sends her backwards into the picture though her position brings her forwards.

30. We made a pilgrimage to Van Gogh's Arles in the South of France. Stephanie is sitting in the famous Café in the Place du Forum.

The Cafe Terrace on the Place du Forum, Arles, at Night 2017
by Anthony D. Padgett (after Van Gogh Arles 1888)

Vincent's Café scene from the Place du Forum is one of his most famous works. By contrast our view point is from the opposite end of the picture. I am painting from out of Van Gogh's view and towards the viewer. When Van Gogh painted his work he would have been standing facing us at the left side of my picture. Here, visiting Arles in the Summer of 2017, Stephanie sits inside the yellow café. We ate French bread and cheeses and drank a Van Gogh cocktail of champagne, absinthe and raspberry liqueur. Then we retired to our hotel in the Place du Forum.

31. In England here is the bar of the Canberra Club where we teach swing dance.

The Night Cafe in the Place Lamartine in Arles 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh Arles 1888)

Not to be confused with the Café on the Place du Forum is the Night Café. This is around the corner from the Place du Forum and was a working men's café for late drinking. My own version is the bar in the club where I teach swing dance. It is the games room and bar of a north English club. The dance floor is in the room next to it. The bar manager stands next to the snooker table. The colours are similar to the Night Café, only it is an unnaturally green carpeted floor and not wood. Three men sit in the corner playing dominoes. Light radiates down from the electric shades and onto the table. The sense of depth is broken with the claustrophobia of a low ceiling almost meeting the floor in the narrow walls.

32. In Arles we met Bernadette Murphy, author of "Van Gogh's Ear" who showed us Vincent's Arles.

L'Arlesienne Madame Ginoux with books 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh Arles 1888 Saint Remy 1890)

L'Arlesienne Madame Ginou helped Vincent in Arles. She ran the station café with her husband Joseph where Vincent had lived after disagreements with his first landlord and before the Yellow House. Bernadette Murphy is in the café where she worked on "Van Gogh's Ear". Her smile shows her enthusiasm and her patterned top is abstracted brushwork. Her book has extraordinary research of civic documents. She proved how the major part of Vincent's ear was severed when he cut off his ear. Her work became a BBC Television program. She showed us Vincent's Arles and helped with contacts for siting my sculpture. I asked her how I could repay her and her advice was to pass on the help.

33. Van Gogh was friends with his postman, Joseph and here is our postman, Dave.

Portrait of the Postman Joseph Roulin 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh Arles 1888)

The Postman Joseph Roulin became a good friend of Vincent. He was an ardent Republican and would have delivered Vincent's many letters, canvases and paints. His green and blue is replaced with the royal Cadmium red and orange background of our postman, Dave Read, who stands out in his pale blue shirt with shadow across him. We have no friendship, only pleasantries as he delivers the post. Emails have replaced letters but Dave is one of a number of General Post Office postmen who delivered Ebay items from France, UK and USA, China used to make my sculpture of Vincent. Since painting him we have more of a friendship.

34. We visited the site of Vincent's Yellow House that was bombed in the Second World War. It was where he wanted to set up an artists' colony.

Vincent's House in Arles (The Yellow House) 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh Arles 1888)

Vincent's Yellow house was close to the train station and on the edge of the old town. Bernadette took us to the place it occupied, which is now a road and a green space. My painting is from the same viewpoint Vincent used and you can see the train bridge on the right. Now most of the traffic is from cars rather than pedestrians.

35. The Yellow House was Vincent's creative studio and my own studio for writing was local cafes.

The Cafe Terrace on the Place du Forum, Alres, at Night 2017
by Anthony D. Padgett (after Van Gogh Arles 1888)

Here is another version of the Cafe Terrace on the Place du Forum, only it is one of the Lancashire tea-rooms where I go to read and work on my computer. The angle of this café in Wheelton looks similar and the café has ironwork that echoes Vincent's café. The two figures are both myself. This is the only time I use an artificial montage because it detracts from Van Gogh expressive realism of. His experiments in imagination came from Gauguin's influence but he was not happy working with it.

36. I replaced Vincent's bedroom with a local cafe where I read books on Vincent.

Tearoom Vincents Bedroom in Arles 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh Arles 1888)

Van Gogh's painted his bedroom in the Yellow House as a scene of complete restfulness. He painted it in Arles and then again in Saint Remy. It has bright colours and this Longton café interior reminded me of the colours and layout of Vincent's bedroom. Such cafes are a kind of studio for me. It is where I would read, rest and be inspired.

37. My daily diet of Tea and Scones in a pretty village setting provides an opportunity for a still life study.

Tearoom Still Life Blue Enamel Coffee pot, Earthenware and Fruit 2017
by Anthony D. Padgett (after Van Gogh Arles 1888)

In the Longton café I would have Earl Gray Tea and a scone, my staple daytime food. These differ from the fine china and enamel coffee pot in Vincent's still life. Vincent shows a combination of a traditional style, with the strong colours bring the objects out towards you. I've tried to combine different ways of brushwork to show the contrast of my styles. The left side has a flat table and background but a contoured cup. The right side has a perspective table and background but a flat plate and scone. The teapot is contoured on the right and flat on the left.

38. In the cafe Vincent's upturned chair sits on my own.

Vincent's Chair With His Pipe i 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh Arles 1888)

Vincent wanted to paint a portrait of Gauguin and a self-portrait of himself at the Yellow House. So he symbolically painted a simple chair with an ornate pipe for himself and a more ornate chair with candle for Gauguin. I've painted the Longton café chairs stacked to show the upturning of Vincent. Perhaps to say that he is dead and I am the blue chair underneath the yellow one. In this piece the background brushwork is all flat and pushes the three dimensional chairs out of the image.

39. The pipe on "Vincent's Chair" represented his ornate inner self on a plain exterior. I found the same French pipe picture.

Vincent's Chair with His Pipe ii 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh Arles 1888)

Vincent included a pipe on his chair. He was a prolific smoker and had many pipes in his self-portraits. Sitting on the straw lattice of my chair's seat is a rare Parisian pipe, I believe to be the same as the one in "Vincent's Chair". It is clay with enamel details. Such pipes darken and the enamel breaks off when smoked. It would have been an expensive and decorative pipe and one of Vincent's best. Scholars emphasise how simple the chair was as a representation of Vincent. However, we should also look at how ornate and pretty the pipe is, perhaps, showing how Vincent wanted to describe his essence.

40. I also painted my sculpture of 4 chairs. Vincent as a kind of artistic Christ. Sacrificing himself for art.

Vincent's Chair with His Pipe iii 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh, Arles 1888)

I created this contemporary sculpture based on "Vincent's Chair". Vincent had an affinity to the sun and sunflowers. He also included himself as Christ in his later works e.g. "Pieta" after Eugene Delacroix's 1850 painting. Without doubt he was gripped with mental disorder. What that disorder was is unknown but his life was increasingly troubled. The 4 chairs are like a crucifix, like a sun, like a Dutch windmill. And yet they remain a personal chair which you can sit in.

41. Paul Gauguin stayed in the Yellow House with Vincent. They argued, Gauguin left and Vincent pursued him with a razor. When confronted Vincent returned to the house, cut off his left ear and gave it to a young woman at a nearby brothel.

Two Hands (Van Gogh Cuts His Ear) 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh, Nuenen 1885)

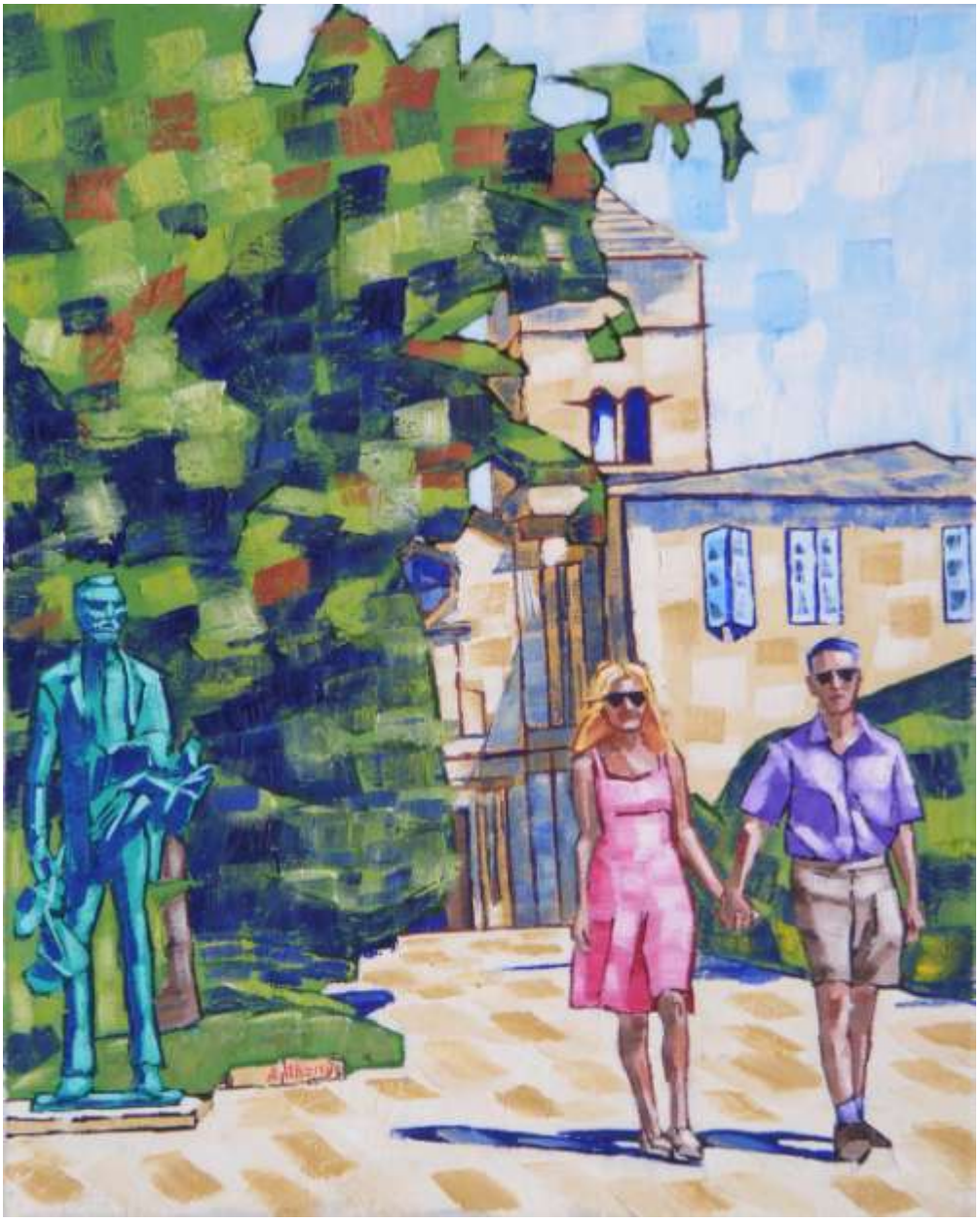
This scene imagines Vincent's view as he looks in a mirror to cut off his ear with a razor. His left hand is about to take hold of his ear and his right hand is ready to cut it. It is an experiment in my style, with a combination of brushwork sizes, small in the background and large in the foreground. There are no outlines used in the work. The vibrant colours suggest a heightened or disturbed state of mind. When he cut off his ear the scene must have been horrific with blood, from a severed artery, everywere. He took this ear to a nearby brothel to give to Rachel, a girl working there. Bernadette showed us where this brothel was likely to have been and demonstrates in her book that the girl was not a prostitute but a domestic worker at the brothel and that her real name was Gabrielle.

42. Vincent was treated for his ear in the local hospital and only survived because the young Doctor knew of the latest treatments.

The Courtyard of the Hospital of Arles 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh Arles 1889)

Bernadette also took us to the hospital where Van Gogh was treated for his injury. Because the Doctor Felix Rey was young he was familiar with some of the latest advances in medicine, otherwise Vincent's wound would most likely have become infected and he would probably have died from his injuries. Whilst in hospital a number of town's people petitioned for Vincent to be sent to a Sanatorium. Bernadette showed in her research that it was only a small part of the community that had wanted this. And the key people behind this group had wanted Vincent out of the Yellow House for personal gain, including the property owner and a local business man. In this painting, similar to Vincent's scene, I have used use just a broad brush to create all the flowers in the hospital grounds, I've avoided using dots of colour in order to have a consistent painted surface that has its own beauty and logic. My scene had few people in as it was early and the crowds of tourists had not yet arrived.

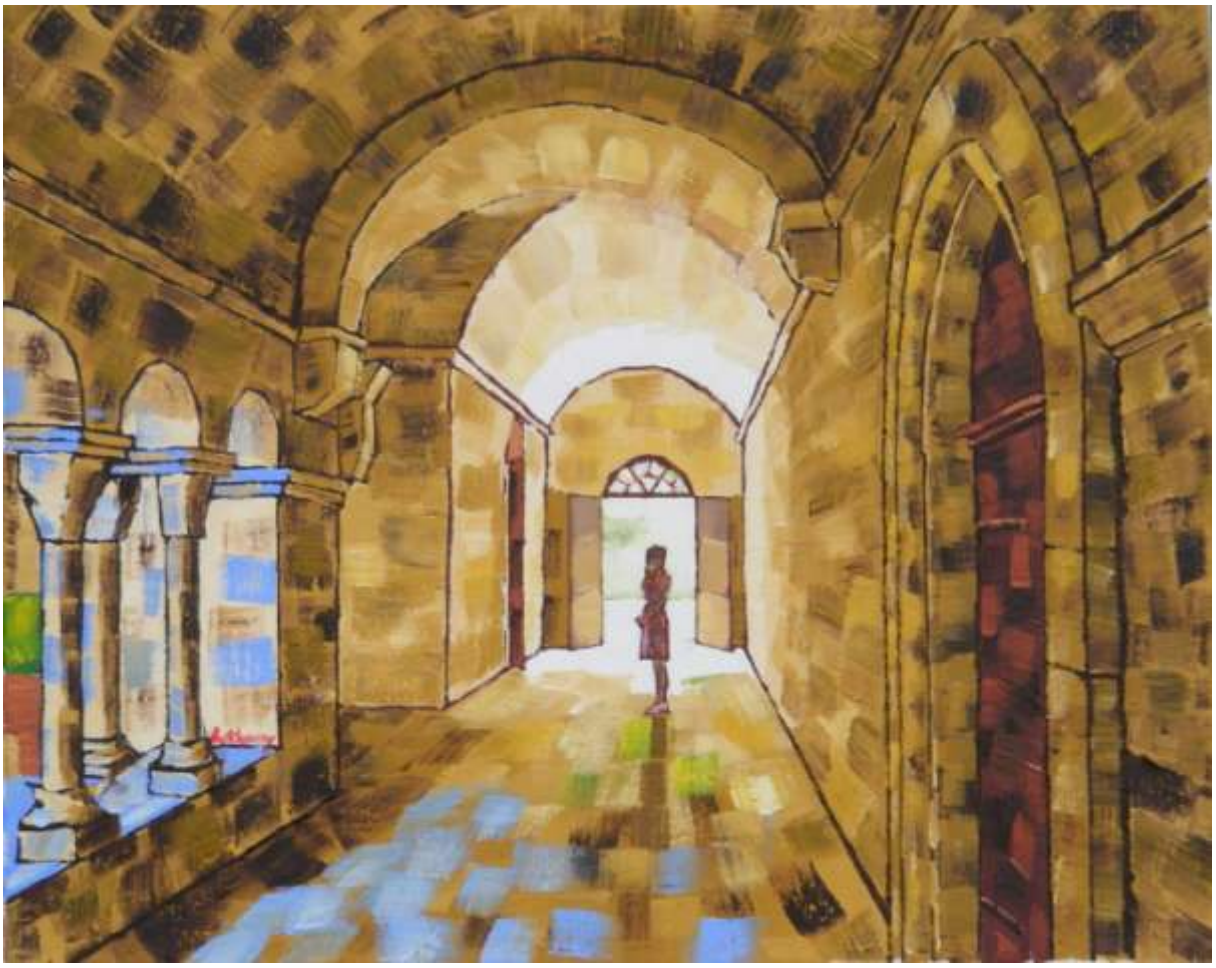
43. He went to Saint-Paul's Sanatorium, Saint-Remy. We visited Saint-Paul's and passed his ghost-like statue.



Trees in the Garden of Saint Paul Hospital with Statue of Vincent 2017
by Anthony D. Padgett (after Van Gogh Saint Remy 1889)

He signed himself into Saint Paul's and here the gardens were a place of rest for him. I visited Saint Paul's with Stephanie and there the ghost of Vincent was a presence in the background. This is shown with us as tourists walking past the statue of Vincent near the entrance path. Here we are walking past a sap green and burnt sienna tree with the entrance to the chapel behind us. The brilliant sunlight soaks the ground.

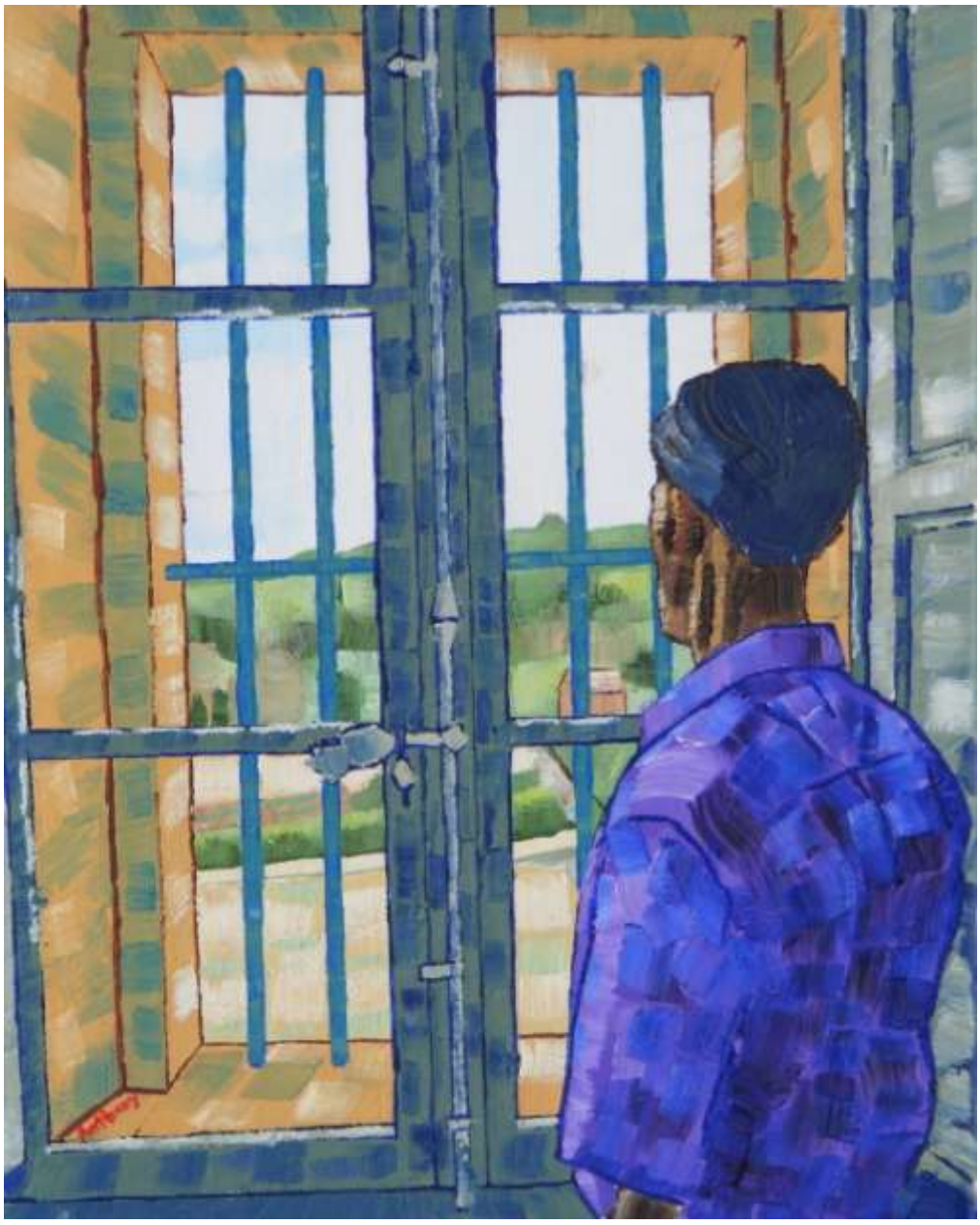
44. The beautiful cloisters were both refuge and prison. The bright light of paradise beckoned beyond the doors.



Corridoor in Saint Paul Hospital 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh Saint Remy 1889)

Stephanie stands by the entrance inside the yellow ochre cloister. She is hesitant to leave the space and its significance. The brushwork gives perspective and also rushes the viewer to the small light of the exit. An exit that was enticing yet elusive to many who had been incarcerated in the sanatorium. The light outside is almost blinding.

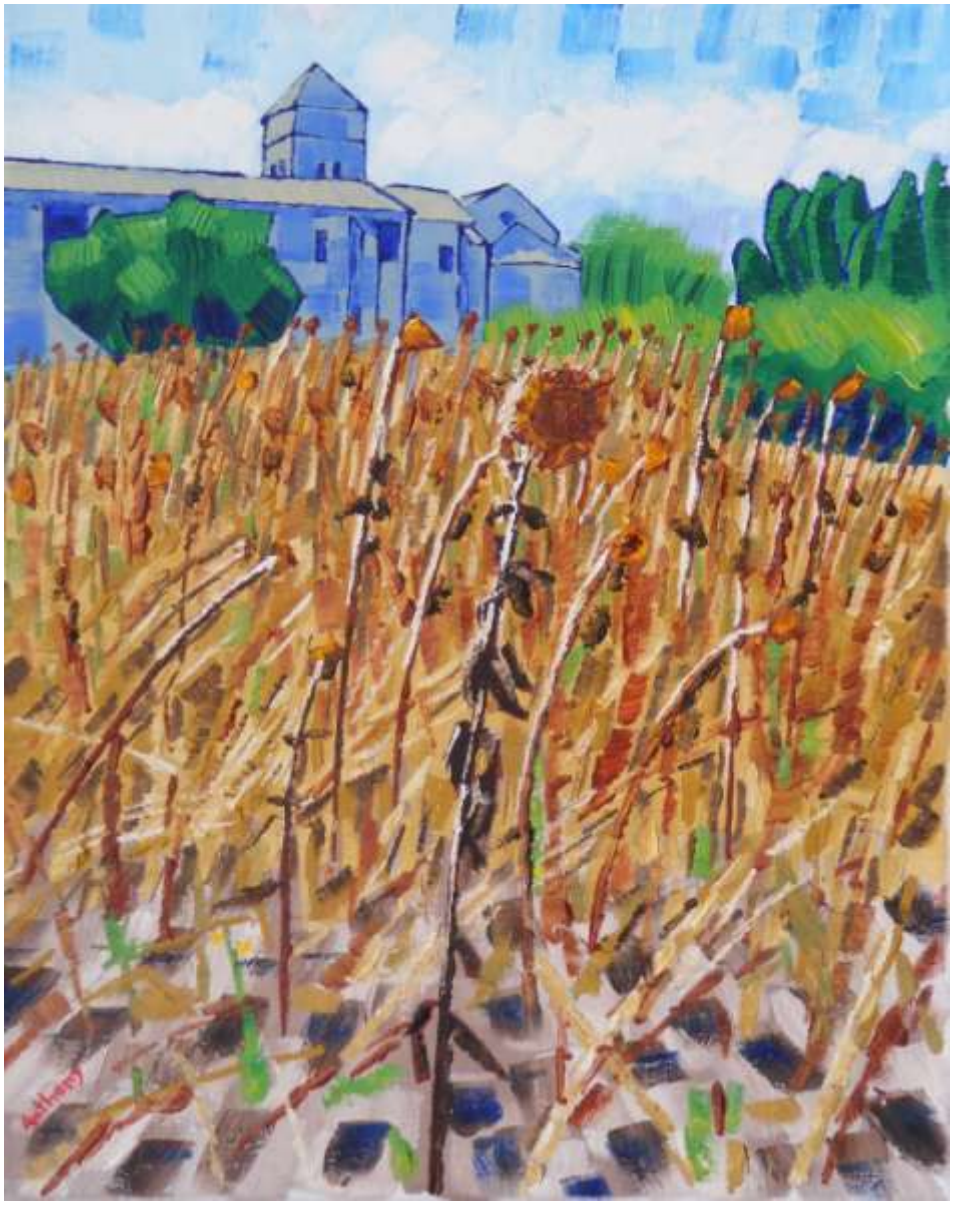
45. Vincent was free to wander outside but his room looked onto the gardens through barred windows.



Vincent's Bedroom Window at the Saint Paul Asylum 2017
by Anthony D. Padgett (after Van Gogh Saint Remy 1889)

Standing at the window of Vincent's room I looked down onto the walled gardens. Brilliant light came into the room where Vincent slept and had his paintings on the walls. He went through periods of mental suffering and depression and even ate paint and drank turpentine in an attempt to kill himself. He was allowed to wander outside but recognised that he was ill and the bars on his window were also self-imposed. I also look at this period in my contemporary art performance, my final work of 2017.

46. In the gardens the sunflowers were parched from a summer drought.



View of the Church of Saint Paul de Mausole with Sunflowers 2017
by Anthony D. Padgett (after Van Gogh Saint Remy 1889)

Vincent's painting is Saint Remy, towards the chapel entrance. Mine is from the opposite side of Saint Remy. You can see the back of the chapel and the garden where a plot of sunflowers were small and dried up. 2017 had been very hot and the climate was definitely changing. The front flower was symbolic of Vincent in with the other flowers. The flowers are made up of simple vertical marks for their stalks which sit in the broad perspective marks of the ground. These contrast with the flat background brushwork. I took many of these flowers to use in a contemporary artwork.

47. Vincent painted himself in this troubled period. Out of the dark night of despair comes hope.

Self Portrait 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett after Van Gogh Saint Remy 1889

Vincent's expressive swirls were a sign of his turbulent mind. He incorporated these into his self-portraits. I painted a version of myself from life and without outlines. My paintbrush was attached to a long bamboo stick. This gave me an even freer style but one where the brushwork merges and is less distinctive. At this time I was going through my own artistic crisis, fervently painting to find a solution and finish a body of work.

48. From a small death comes life. The stars and the moon give us hope.

Starry Night 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett (after Van Gogh Saint Remy 1889)

In the darkness of Vincent's depression he was able to conceive of the Starry Night. It was a transformation regenerative for him. He had become like the seasons and had died now to be reborn. The moon and the stars provide alternative light sources and perspective points in the dark blue night sky. I experimented with different kinds of radiating brushwork. At Tarleton Church the brown bench stands out as a marker of the mourning of those who have died and the warm light of the church reminds us of life continuing.

49. This light of hope carries us through until we reach the dawn.

Enclosed Field with Rising Sun 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh Saint Remy 1889)

The sun-rising in Vincent's work is over the walled gardens at Saint Paul's. Here is a time of optimism again. He also began painting biblical scenes such as "The Raising of Lazarus" where he depicts himself as Lazarus and even as Christ. His perspective vanishing point is upper left and the sun radiates from the upper right. The long shadows of the wall show it is early morning and they will recede as the sun rises. My own work is painted late afternoon from over the wall of our back garden in Hutton. This field is green space used for grazing cows and sheep and for making hay. Now it is in threat of houses being built upon it. The painting shows the ground with a central vanishing point on the dark horizon of the hedge. The sky is made of flat downward brush strokes and with the sun's point just above it. The sun's cadmium and lemon yellow rays overlap the ground brushwork The consistency of brush stroke provides an overall semi-abstract effect.

50. Like the olive tree, we renew, re-grow and then our crop can be picked.

Olive Picking 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett (after Van Gogh Saint Remy 1889)

Vincent was allowed to wander outside the Sanatorium. And just outside the grounds were olive groves where he painted people picking the olives. Here I am in a farm near Saint Remy, picking an olive from a tree. The olive was bitter and hard, still needing soaking in brine. The farm was a winery with vineyards. So our tourist trip there was very pleasurable. We had left the workspace of seeing Van Gogh's Sanatorium and could just relax and have fun. The ground, the sky, the tree and myself are all united in the brush strokes. The colour balance is between the elements of a burnt sienna ground and a blue sky. The shadows remain dark and outlined like objects.

51. We walk through nature's beauty, past its trees, and are connected with it.

Road with Cypress and Star 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh Auvers sur Oise 1890)

Van Gogh's evening scene was created in Auvers but here, at Saint-Remy, Stephanie is walking past a Viridian green Cyprus tree in the same vineyard farm that I picked olives. We picked fresh figs from the trees and grapes from the vines. The beauty and peace was encompassing. The brush strokes for both the ground and the sky get shorter in the distance. The areas of light and dark conflict in the Cyprus tree and contrast with Stephanie who walks past in white.

52. I replace Van Gogh's painting of a working class family with my middle-class brother's family.

The New Potato Eaters 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh Nuenen 1885)

Vincent's seminal The Potato Eaters, a family of peasant workers, in Nuenen, is here updated as The New Potato Eaters. The family is now middle class and the room is brightly coloured. It is my eldest brother Stephen, his wife and my nieces. I have no children and my nieces, my brother's daughters, are my only descendent relatives. They are having a meal at my parents' house. Most are laughing and the central focus is on the glass, the flower or the empty space where the main course will be served. The bookcase has personal photographs and the room has expanded by partition. This is the new average family; one of wealth and consumerism. The scene leads to an open space of light rather than to the closed darkness of Van Gogh's work. Vincent loved the lowest farm worker and made copies of a number of famous works of farm workers by Jean-Francois Millet. He loved the basic family unit and wished to have children himself. He had previously lived with a pregnant prostitute Clarissa Maria Hoornik (known as Sien) and her five year old daughter when he lived in the Hague. His way of showing love was to everyone in general and to help those around him when he could.

53. Stephanie's parents are no longer with us. And before too long we will lose my parents.

Evening - The Watch (after Millet) 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh, Saint Remy 1889)

Van Gogh copied Millet's painting of two people looking after a baby. Here it is my elderly parents looking after each other. They keep warm in a small room in their large house. I use a variety of brush sizes (large in the background and small for my parents) and no outlines. Here a tension exists between making simple brush-strokes and creating realistic features. The style lends itself to a realism whose pursuit can also detract from the style. Sadly Stephanie's parents are dead and my painting is a grateful celebration of my parents growing old together. When they pass away then the seasons will move closer to my own death.

54. The Good Samaritan offers us hope that people can be part of one big family.

The Good Samaritan (after Delacoix) 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh, Saint Remy 1890)

In my classes I influenced other painters who used elements of my style in a final show. It was silly to be upset when I had taken so much from Van Gogh so I thought of Bernadette's advice, to pass on the help. Vincent had copied biblical scenes of including "The Good Samaritan" by Delacroix. A man is robbed and people from his faith walk past but a Samaritan stops to help. It shows that actions are more important than words. This was painted for the final show. Vincent reversed and lightened Delacroix's work.

55. Vincent moved north to Auvers sur Oise where he was under the watch of Doctor Gachet. I worked on my paintings until I got migraines.

Portrait of Doctor Gachet 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh, Auvers sur Oise 1890)

I was working too hard and got repeated migraine headaches of flashing lights. I went to my doctor, Dr Raza Ansari. He said I was suffering from stress and prescribed me a sedative but I chose to relax and sleep more instead. My goal of 60 paintings+ in a year was small compared to Vincent's 300+. It showed me his driven character and why he kept having breakdowns. Dr Ansari declined for me to paint him, saying it meant he would need to complete too many patient doctor relationship forms.

56. A white house in Auvers is here replaced with the house where I live with Stephanie.

The White House at Night - Auvers by Van Gogh 1890 and Steph's House
by Anthony D. Padgett 2017

A lady walks past a white house in Auvers. This is Stephanie's house in Hutton where we live. It is also my Yellow House, where I would finish paintings begun earlier in the day. From here we would walk or drive in the summer evenings to the lanes of Sollom, a more rural area, a few miles north of Hutton.

57. In Autumn wheat had replaced the Rapeseed in the Sollom fields.

Wheat Fields 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett (after Van Gogh Auvers sur Oise 1890)

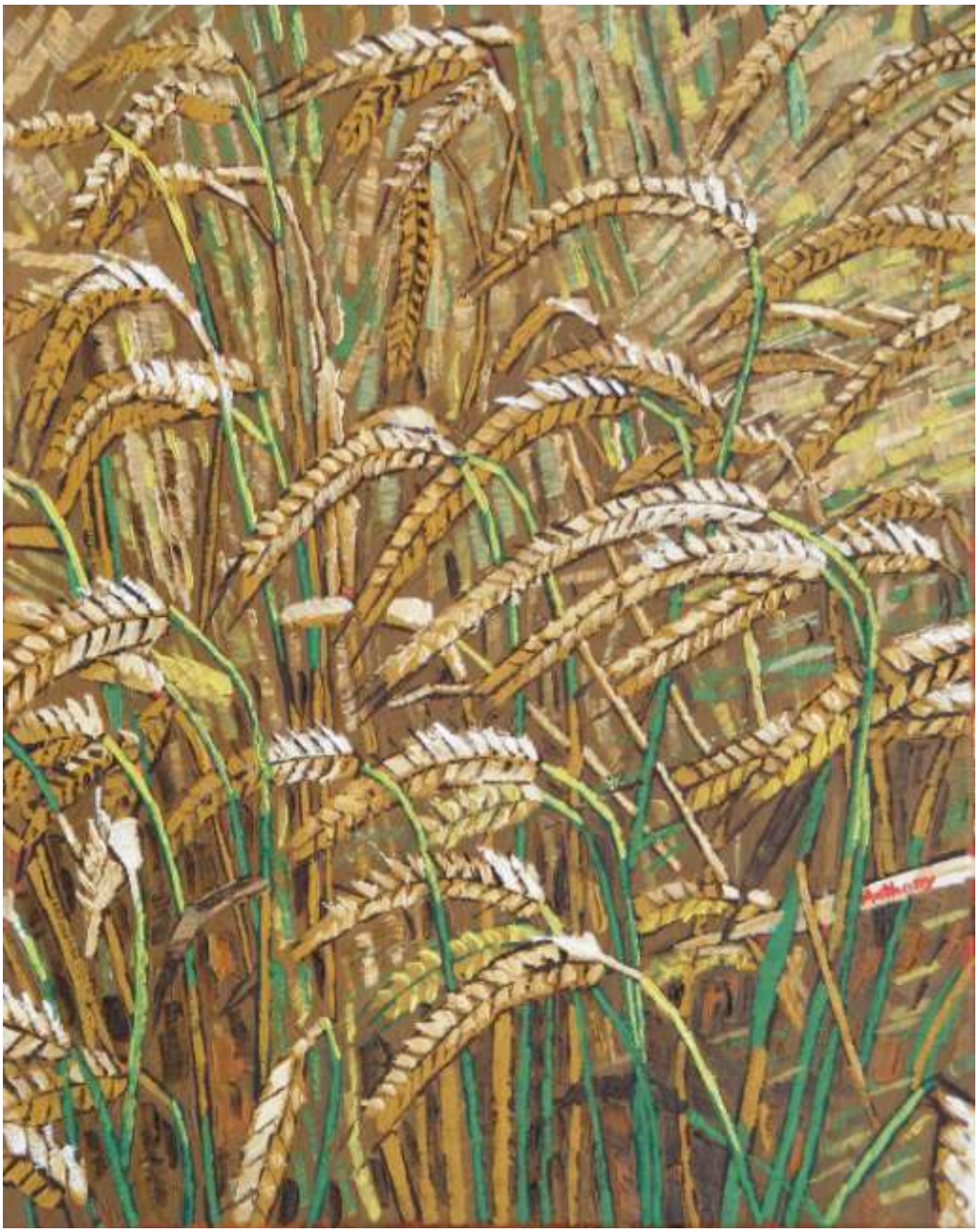
The wheat-fields rippled like waves, blowing and in the wind more than the rapeseed. These wheat-fields show the necessity to include other elements of style than just the flat brushwork in producing work to adequately describe a scene.

58. Stephanie stood at home in nature.

Young Girl Standing against a Background of Wheat 2017 Middle Aged Lady by Anthony D. Padgett (after Van Gogh Auvers sur Oise 1890)

It is a young girl in Vincent's painting, but here Stephanie, a middle-aged lady, has walked into the inviting wheat-fields. She enjoys the sun and the beauty surrounding her. Steph has always loved nature. She is a happy and helpful person who always thinks good of others. Painting young women was frowned upon in polite society. And Vincent would paint Dr Gachet's daughter. This was part of a reason why Dr Gachet grew a dislike for Vincent despite being jealous of Vincent's artistic ability.

59. The complex beauty of the wheat fields was hard to capture. I engaged with its forms and colours.



Ears of Wheat 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh Auvers sur Oise 1890)

The complexity of the scene of ears of wheat is rendered so that it appears surprisingly simple. Details on the ears of wheat have a beauty and this could only be captured with outlines. The broad-brushwork never really getting an opportunity to be displayed. The painting is on the edge of what can be achieved with my style.

60. Growing to full ripeness in the sun. Van Gogh's work had reached its peak yet he felt he had failed.

Ears of Wheat ii 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh Auvers sur Oise 1890)

A close-up of an ear of wheat allows the use of broad brushwork.
The background sky is dark with foreboding.

61. Like the wheat we all face the grim reaper.

The Combine Harvester after The Reaper with Sickle 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett (after Van Gogh Saint Remy 1889)

The wheat is cut down by Van Gogh's copy of Millet's small figure of a bending reaper. In this reaper's work he connects to the living wheat. This is replaced by The Combine Harvester. Humans are disconnected as they destroy nature with machines. Ultimately civilization might destroy the natural cycle and that cycle might no longer be there in future generations. I lament the disappearance of the old ways of farming and of nature. All we can do is try and help preserve some aspect of them.

62. Vincent shot himself in the fields around Auvers. His brother, who had supported him financially, had a new son, also called Vincent, and Van Gogh didn't want to be a burden to him

Wheat Fields near Auvers with Revolver 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh Auvers sur Oise 1890)

On 27th July 1890 Vincent took a pistol into a wheat field and shot himself. He returned to L'auberge Ravoux in Auvers and went to bed. He was attended by Dr Gachet who did not have the skill to operate on him and he was visited by his brother Theo. Two days after shooting himself he died. Saying "do not cry, I have done it for the good of everybody". This painting is done from Vincent's eye view with the same kind of pistol he was believed to have used. Its bullets are small so immediate fatal injury was unlikely.

63. After the harvest the worker can rest. Vincent had returned to the stars.

Noon Rest from Work (after Millet) 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh Saint Remy 1890)

Vincent copied Millets painting and this is one of my early paintings and the first landscapes I created in my new style. It shows the foreground figure with outlines and simple brushwork. Behind are the broad brush strokes that create the wheat stack and the fields beyond. This is one of the best examples of my style. I am resting in a field in Sollom and a full agricultural season has passed. I now rest. My body of artwork is near completion and I am able to rest.

64. Perhaps there is an after-life or perhaps nature is all that there is.

Field with Wheat Stacks 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh Auvers sur Oise 1890)

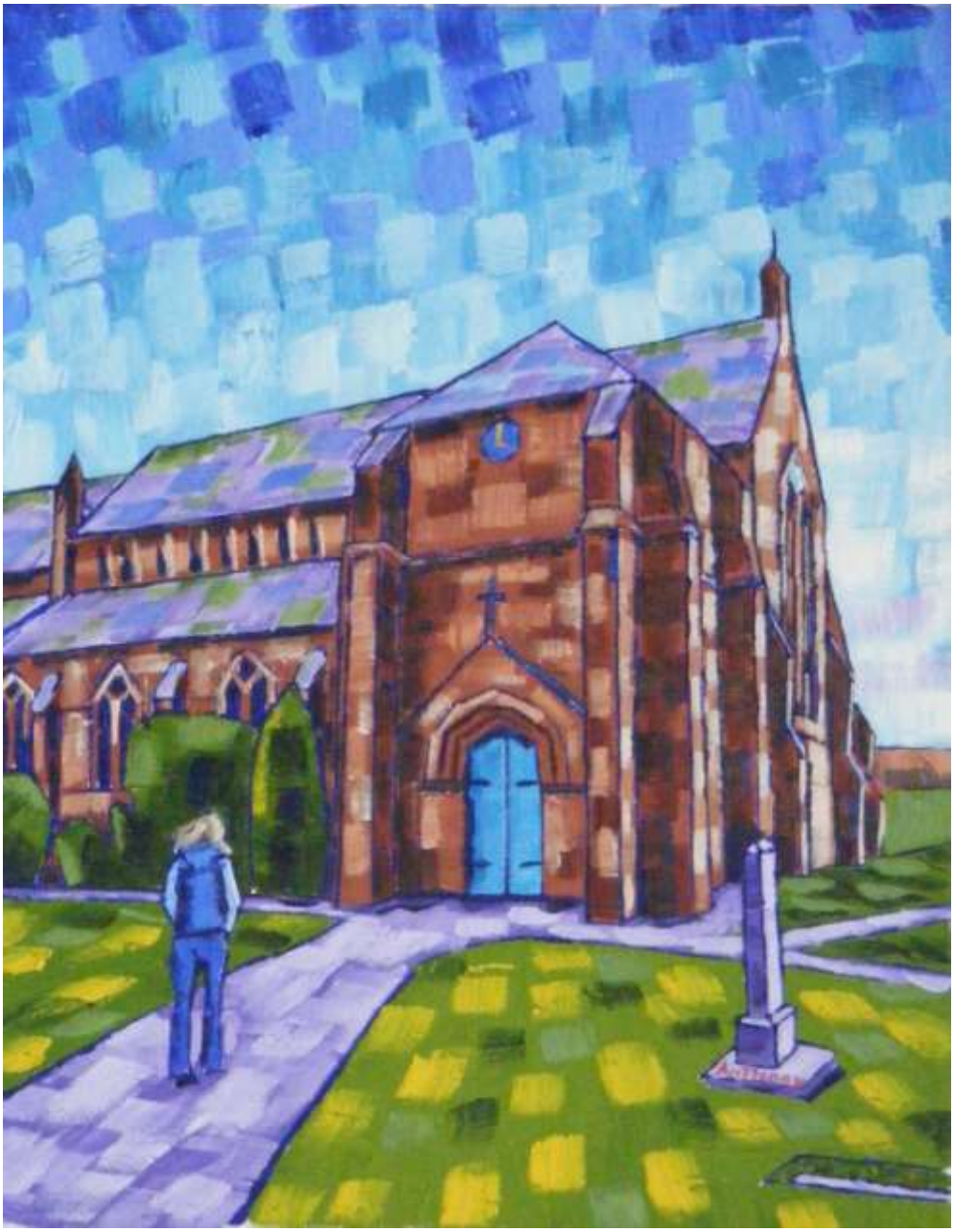
Vincent painted wheat stacks and hay bales in Arles and in Auvers. We have different wheat sheaves and stacks to those in France in the late nineteenth century. Ours are now just hay bales, made by stacking machines. The wheat has been removed already by the combined harvester. The hay left in the field. The artist is no longer present in the work. The outlined hay bales are the subjects.

65. Like Van Gogh's crows my gulls announce migration or death.

Wheat Field Gulls (after Crows) 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh Auvers-sur-Oise 1890)

One of Vincent's last works is Wheat Field with Crows. The dark sky over the golden fields has birds seeming to attack the viewer. Here are the fields of Sollom in winter. The sky is dark, the cold ground is damp and grass is growing in the fields. The trees have no leaves and the brushwork is layered over each other in a a scene that is flat and uninviting. The birds, gulls made of simple brush marks, fly across the picture and on the left one swoops out of the trees to confront the viewer. Like death.

66. Stephanie walks in our local village church grounds where her parents are buried.



Church at Longton 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett (after Van Gogh Auvers sur Oise 1890)

Vincent's lady walks past a church. Stephanie walks past the church where her parents are buried. The brushwork leads to the closed blue church door. The church walls points upwards and the sky downwards. She is painted in simple strokes. She wants to connect to her parents. We live near her relatives and the memory of her parents. She has her own journey as an academic and is helping people and me, through love. We have no children so how do we carry on our line. Is it through nephews and nieces, my paintings or nature?

67. We all head down a straight road to death but the sun presents us with hope of a life after death.

The End - Example of Styles 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett

The work is complete and the artist and their work is harvested. The obvious road is to the house of death, but as we travel there we still look towards the sun, hoping that will be our final destination. We hope that we can live on there, or live on through our children, or through our work, or just through the nature around us. But the more we distance ourselves from nature, the less we live on. If we just pass down inert objects then the best we can hope for is for these objects to convey nature and family to us. This final painting is a study based on an early sketch giving the combination of different styles. The central person is made of simple marks. The houses and tree have outlines and the tree has sculpted brushwork to give solidity but there are no outlines around the distant clouds and hills. The clouds have perspective to a vanishing point. Perspective brushwork on the road and left field create depth and direction. And flat brushwork on the right hand field pushes the background forward and accentuates the contoured tree, pushing that even closer to us. Meanwhile the Sun provides an additional radiating perspective.

5. CONCLUSION (1890)

So why did Van Gogh shoot himself and what do I think he can teach us?

Vincent taught me a deep appreciation of nature. And to love nature more than art. Because if our legacy is art then it is dead, inanimate objects. Whereas humanity and nature are living.

Ultimately it remains a mystery why Vincent shot himself. What his thoughts and motivations were. These are my reflections from a year with Vincent. The three key factors are art, nature and children.

Vincent's paintings were appreciated by his art dealer brother Theo (who supplied him with materials and living costs) but he hadn't been promoting them due to the market not being ready. Theo was also running out of space. With a baby in Theo's family his wife Jo had questioned how they could go on supporting Vincent. An argument between the three of them occurred and this affected Vincent's mood. Vincent's nephew was named after him. And this probably reminded Vincent that he himself was named after his older brother who died at birth, one year to the date that Vincent was born. Infant mortality was a real danger and he would have wanted to best opportunity for his nephew. Vincent's work was beginning to be noticed in artistic circles but he didn't want the limelight and objected even when reviewed favourably. His intention had been to sell his work but this no longer seemed possible if Theo wouldn't sell it.

Vincent shot himself so that his brother can look after his new wife and son. It is the natural way that Vincent's line is continued, through his brother's son. The remorse is too great for Theo who died just 6 months later as his Syphilis attacked his brain. Vincent saw the seasons come and go. He identified with them. They came to an end and so must he. If he was to die then his nephew, the new seed, would live on. His focus was on nature and family. Ultimately they were more important to him than art. And it makes sense that our purpose has to be about nature and family and not art. Because art is about creating things that are inanimate.

My artworks have also sold few. The only hope is if I find a dealer, which is unlikely. However, with work based on one of the most popular artists ever I live in hope. Vincent has helped me to appreciate the seasons and life going on. As far as children though, for me it is just a focus on nature that gives me purpose. And whilst in Vincent's time having children used to be in harmony with nature and the seasons, now, in the 21st century, we need to think whether humanity is having too many children – most of whom grow into consuming adults who are destroying the planet and the natural cycles.

6. CONTEMPORARY ART (2017)

We need a return to the traditional belief in the beauty of nature. A return to Van Gogh's beliefs. Aesthetics and ethics are not separate. More than any other art movement Contemporary art is against nature because it is made up of consumer objects. The act of making art is a form of artificiality, manufacturing and craft. But in the past the subject of art has often been about nature, e.g. landscape painting, or about the combination of nature and manufacture e.g. architectural scenes in nature. When Marcel Duchamp proclaimed a urinal as a piece of art, i.e. "Fountain" 1917, then the subject of art was manufactured objects and even the way of making art became less natural and more about incorporating "readymade" mass produced objects. As such Contemporary art is symptomatic of the destruction of nature that we are currently encouraging through our selfish consumerism.

My contemporary work shows how, over 125 years after the death of Van Gogh mass production is replacing almost everything. The agricultural hand of mankind was always present on nature, but it was a light touch and did not distort it too much. It didn't turn nature from its original being. Now nature has been deliberately destroyed e.g. through pesticides, herbicides, deforestation and property development, or has accidentally destroyed by global warming. The natural items selected to remain have been made into commodities. And the rest of nature is dying and although we are categorising it, understanding it, and making documentaries about it, it is becoming extinct or genetically modified.

Nature is commodified and so is the artwork of Vincent Van Gogh. The internet shows how many posters, cards, key rings, books, t-shirts etc that you can buy. And I include myself as one of the commodifiers. In the year of "A Year With Vincent" the animated film "Loving Vincent" was released and after returning from holiday in Arles I was teaching dance at a vintage festival at the Midland Hotel in Morecambe and standing outside, with a bicycle was Vincent Van Gogh. I could not believe the coincidence. It just happened to be Walter DeForest who had been at Edinburgh Fringe Festival where he was putting on a show "Van Gogh Find Yourself". He was in Morecambe because he saw the Vintage Festival was on and wanted to take part. We chatted and I went to see his show the next week. I had hoped to paint Walter and other scenes but I ran out of time.

68. My contemporary art here is manufactured chairs are used to symbolise Van Gogh as a sun, a windmill, a Christ crucified.

Vincent's Chair with His Pipe iv 2017 by Anthony D. Padgett
(after Van Gogh, Arles 1888)

I based this free standing contemporary sculpture on Vincent's Chair. The chair is taken from its normal use and turned into a decorative object that defies gravity. Vincent had an affinity to the sun and sunflowers. He also included himself as Christ in a number of his later works and the 4 chairs are like a crucifix, like a sun, like a Dutch windmill. And yet they remain a personal chair which you can sit on.

69. Here is a collection of pipes like those Van Gogh smoked - each birthing or smoking the next.

Vincent Van Gogh Pipeline 2017 by Anthony David Padgett

Vincent was a prolific pipe smoker and I collected Dutch and French antique pipes to find the one that typified him to include in my bust/sculpture of him. These extra pipes cascade off the plinth. The collection includes a 17th century Dutch clay pipe, a pipe bought in Arles, mis-size modern versions of the Corn pipe and Bruyere pipe. The Meerschuim pipe at the end of the line is from the Amsterdam Pipe Museum and was an actual pipe used as part of their exhibition of Van Gogh's pipes in 2015.

70. The ear that he offered to a young woman has become a chocolate ear, a Eucharistic consumer item.

Vincent's Chocolate Ear 2017 by Anthony David Padgett

Vincent gave his severed ear to a young lady. In his mental turmoil he had turned his own body part into a gift. With the commoditisation of Vincent's paintings, art and life even his ear is now a consumable object. The crass pun of Chocolate Ear and Chocolatier illustrates the crassness of this product.

71. The sunflowers have turned into manufactured sunflower spreads. The subject matter and the materials of contemporary art are artificial and show we are alienated from nature.

Vase With 14 Sunflower Spreads 2017 by Anthony David Padgett

The vast fields of sunflower crop reduced to margarine tubs on supermarket shelves. The beauty of the flowers is turned into a tub cover. Vincent's symbolism of the flowers as human figures now suggests that humans have also become packaged products. We are effective as consumers but have lost our connection to nature.

72. Sunflowers are industrially categorised, catalogued and genetically modified.

Categories of Sunflower 2017 by Anthony David Padgett

Inside the filing cabinet are dried sunflowers that I collected from Arles and Saint Remy. They are arranged according to size and they protrude from the drawers. We are destroying nature and all that will be left of the diversity and natural beauty is dried specimens or seed collections. The drawers of categorised sunflowers are sorted like specimens of lost species.

73. But here is the pipe that shows us Vincent's colourful essence, a relic of his inner being.

Vincent's Chair Pipe 2017 by Anthony David Padgett

This conceptual work is arguably not a contemporary art work. It is my claim that this is the same pipe as used in "Vincent's Chair" 1888, a painting held in the National Gallery, London. It has the same features as the painted pipe (with allowance for adaptations Van Gogh made whilst painting it). I believe that a better example cannot be found. It was made in Paris around the 1880s and was owned by Noel Saunier, a Parisian artist who was represented by the gallery that Theo Van Gogh worked for and who died in 1890, the same year as Vincent Van Gogh. My partner and I had visited the Van Gogh Museum and Don Duco, the curator of the Amsterdam Pipe Museum. He spent a good deal of time in consultation with us and then I purchased a couple of pipes from the Van Gogh Pipe exhibition that he had curated. On return I found this pipe on a French internet site. Just like Marchel Duchamp claimed a urinal is art (and could make this claim because he was an artist) so also I claim that this is the same pipe as used on Van Gogh's chair (because I am an artist and have consulted with experts in pipe history who have said that it is as good an example as is likely to be found). Perhaps I question how to authenticate a pipe or perhaps I question the legitimacy of Duchamp's statement that his work was art.

74-75. Vincent ate paint in his disturbed mind at Saint Remy Sanatorium. In my performance I lick and spit "Fourteen Sunflowers" onto a glazed frame.

Licking Van Gogh's Sunflowers 2017 by Anthony David Padgett

My final work of 2017 was a contemporary art performance to look at Vincent's troubled episodes of eating paint and also recreate the shock that 19th century viewers experienced when seeing his work. It links primitive cave painting (where pigments were spat around hands) with modern consumerism of paintings. The work was filmed in the field behind our house makes a metaphor of the suicidal mania in Van Gogh's troubled mind. It is. The field is threatened with being built upon. Humanity progresses in a madness of rampant building, manufacturing and consumerism. It engages a suicidal tendency, a will to destroy itself through destroying nature. Beauty may result, but it's merely a mask.

7. CONCLUSION (2017)

So, again, what did I learn from A Year With Vincent. THE VAN GOGH PARADOX: we make art about nature but making art is artificial. The need for expression is natural and yet art begins to rival nature. We need a balance between art and nature. Between mankind and nature. And at the moment we have too much mankind. Too much art.

Vincent Van Gogh Bust by Anthony David Padgett 2017

And when we identify with nature. Then we can balance it with humanity and art. And that gives us meaning and a way of living on after death.

Art praising nature (e.g. of sunflowers) replaces the real nature but the making of art is a natural action (i.e. of human expression). This action becomes more praised than the original natural object that inspired it. Art then becomes its own subject, and art starts to be created about art. This art is paradoxically natural and unnatural. But to follow it leads us in a downward spiral into narcissism.

THE VAN GOGH PARADOX
To make art is to diminish nature.
But to not make art is to diminish your own nature.

When we have a balance with nature then this paradox is not a problem. And by finding a balance or art and nature, by taking pleasure in the beauty of nature and by helping the environment - then something of us lives on – so long as the environment survives. But if we don't care for the environment and nature then we cannot connect deeply to it. But what is deeply troubling is that too few of us, myself included, seem to care enough to stop making excuses and actually do something about it.

Vincent Van Gogh Bust by Anthony David Padgett 2017

8. SCULPTURE OF VINCENT (2017)

So I wanted to pay homage to Vincent with a sculpture. Searching all his many self-portraits and combining them into one image.

Artist with Vincent Van Gogh Sculpture by Anthony David Padgett 2017

Everyone has their own idea of what Vincent Van Gogh looked like. I hope that the bust catches many of his features and also acknowledges the impossibility of getting an exact likeness. The work is a balancing between different images of Van Gogh made after an extensive study of his many self portraits and the other images of him. There are 3 parts to the sculpture made from 19th century antiques and also sunflowers from Arles. The base has two sections. One is related to his life as a painter and the other to his life as a letter writer. Items show the lighter and darker sides of Vincent Van Gogh. The items are all from the period of his life, or just after, and are copies of the same, or similar, ones to those he would have used. I hope to find homes for 5 cold-cast finishes of the pieces (brass, bronze, copper, aluminium and slate) in sites associated with Van Gogh and his life, in Holland, Belgium, France and England.

THE BUST

To construct the bust I took photographs of Van Gogh as a youth, paintings of him by his contemporaries and also his own self portraits (of which there are many) painted in Paris, Arles and Saint-Remy. I then went through these images looking for common aspects because you will find that they all have a variety of features and lengths of features with little common ground between them. For instance, there are many different representations of his nose. It can be long, broad, bent, pointed hooked and large or smaller, narrow, straight and fine. It can be bony or full, and concave or convex. It was factors like this that I needed to accommodate. There are very few where he doesn't have a beard and some of these are when he was bandaged after cutting off his left ear.

I took the self-portraits and then reversed them in the computer to make them the correct way around because he was painting himself in a mirror. I also used portraits of Van Gogh that were the correct way round by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, John Russell, Archibald Hartrick and Horace Livens. And I used family images of his brother Theo (as a younger and older man) and of his Nephew, Vincent.

I used a skull and anatomical models to create the sculpture, looking at the bone structure within the images and understanding where the sinews in the muscles within the face were. For example; Van Gogh tends to look to the side in his self portraits because he is painting himself in a mirror and looking to the side. My bust is looking straight forward and that affects how eyeballs sit in the head and the way the muscles sit on the face. Two features, however, that are always clear are that he had a very striking ring around his sunflower like irises and he had small, intense pupils. I based his famous ear on photographs of him as a young man, on his self-portraits and also on a profile photograph of his sister Anna Cornelia whose ear closely resembles Vincent's.

I first created a bust without hair which I photographed as I thought it would be of interest to see it without a beard, I then put a beard and hair on it. It was also tricky how to show his beard and hair as in different periods he had different lengths of both beard and hair. The portraits that we normally associate Van Gogh with were when he was in the Sanatorium at Saint-Remy towards the end of his life and they are not as representative of his look in the rest of his life as an artist. I've tried to keep the hair as similar to his Paris period but with an amount of length from the Saint-Remy period. Sometimes the moustache curled up at the sides and sometimes down. Sometimes it is over the mouth and other times clear of the upper lip. So I've combined these features.

And I didn't put any collars or clothes on the bust as it would define the period quite specifically and I wanted it to cover all his time as an adult, as an art dealer, a teacher, an evangelist and an artist. I worked quickly to capture some of the energy and life in Van Gogh's painting. He would produce an oil painting a day. I've tried to make the marks in the clay like his brushwork in his Paris period. I've made it in a traditional 19th century style of bust to fit with the era he was from. It was cast by Anne Wood and her team at Lakeland Mouldings.

THE BASES

Box Base - his box of paints, the pipe he smoked, the razor he cut his ear with, the gun he shot himself with.

PAINT BOX

This small French paint-box forms the main part of the upper base. It belonged to Marguerite Salvetat whose name, with the date 1896, is written in the top inside corner of the box. The box, paints, dipper pots, palette and palette knife are still in the style of those of the 1880s.

The paints are made by Lefranc & Cie of Paris (1886-1922) and may have been of a kind used by Van Gogh. And whilst Van Gogh favoured Tasset et Lhôte of Paris (1887-1899) the style of the oil paint tubes and of the screw tops is the same.

Van Gogh used many styles of palette and the dippers, palette and brushes. These are very similar, only smaller, to those in Van Gogh's Paris self portraits "Self-Portrait in Front of the Easel" 1888.

A YEAR WITH VINCENT VAN GOGH

PIPE

This extremely rare Gambier Pipe is the same as that shown in Vincent's painting "Van Gogh's Chair" 1888 where he symbolically represents his essence as a pipe on a chair. The pipe was owned by Noel Saunier, another French artist, who coincidentally died in 1890 (the same year as Vincent). Saunier's work for sale by Goupil & Co / Boussod-Valadon (shown in the 1887 Paris catalogue of Tableaux, Aquarelles & Dessins from de l'Ecole Moderne) and Saunier was friends with artist François-Auguste Ravier, whose work (between 1883-1886) Theo Van Gogh was in charge of with the dealer Boussod-Valadon / Goupil & Cie. Vincent Van Gogh had also worked with Goupil & Cie in Paris from 1875-6 and was an artist in Paris from March 1886 – February 1888.

Nothing is know of what happened to Van Gogh's pipe when he left Arles in 1889. Could it have found its way to Saunier via Theo when all Vincent's works were sent to him. Theo died shortly after Vincent and so Theo's wife Jo Van Gogh-Bonger inherited the effects.

RAZOR

Artist Paul Gauguin was an artist guest of Vincent in his Yellow House in Arles. When Gauguin decided to leave the house he writes of Van Gogh approaching him in December 1888 with a cut-throat razor and then running away. Shortly afterwards Van Gogh cut off his ear. The exact kind of blade used is not known. However, this is a Kropp cut-throat razor. It is stamped "Ground in Hamburg" and this dates it from 1888-1896. Vincent cut his ear in 1888 so it belongs to the same period.

GUN

Around 1960 an Auvers farmer discovered a rusty Lefaucheux 7.0mm pocket pinfire revolver in the fields where Van Gogh shot himself. The bullets were small and so it accounts for how it took Vincent 2 days to die from the bullet wound.The revolver was displayed in the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam in 2016 alongside a good example of a Lefaucheux. On my base is a nice example of a late 19th century 7mm pinfire. These are often referred to as "Lefaucheux" pinfire revolvers because they were exactly the same - although most were made by back-street Belgian gunsmiths who avoided stamping their names on the revolvers for fear of infringing patent laws.

Books Base - his letters and sunflowers for his relationship with his brother.

BOOKS

Van Gogh lived and worked in Holland, Begium, France and England. He was well read and spoke Dutch, French, German and English. He wrote many letters to his brother Theo and artist friends, including Emile Bernard. They help show the psychology and beliefs of the artist. And they were part of what helped to make his work and life famous. After the deaths of Vincent and his brother Theo, Theo's wife, Jo Van Gogh–Bonger, promoted Vincent's art and his letters. Many of the letters were published in various magazines and exhibition catalogues in the two decades after his death. These books are the earliest publications of his letters in book form:

- "Briefe" was edited by Margarete Mauthner and first published in Germany 1906.
- This was followed by "Letters of a Post-Impressionist" an English translation from the German "Briefe" by Anthony M. Ludovici, first published in 1911.
- "Letters to Emile Bernard" first published in France in 1911.
- "Brieven aan zijn brooder" edited by Jo Van Gogh –Bonger, published in Holland 1914

SUNFLOWERS

Vincent painted his Sunflower paintings in 1888 to decorate his Yellow House in Arles. These dry sunflowers were picked in Arles in August 2017 when I visited Arles. I use them to symbolise Vincent's relationship to his brother Theo.

9. FINAL CONCLUSION

Vincent will live on in the trees and flowers that he shared the beauty of. Only we have to make sure these trees and flowers don't disappear.

Dear Brother, here is a final conclusion of my journey – though for myself and yourself also I hope that the work will continue giving pleasure and ideas.

I was a struggling artist, getting older, reaching Middle-Age. I had some recognition of my work but most of it lay languishing in my store at my parents' home. I was reaching a mid-life-crisis. After "A Year With Van Gogh" I found an appreciation of nature. And I found a new art style. But art reflects the times we live in, so, inevitably, until we find a balance with nature, it is part of the destruction of nature. Unless it can help us find a way to stop that destruction.

There is new life in the fields and life cycles. For the moment life goes on. I value nature and what is left of the old systems of agriculture. But there is sadness at the loss of the old ways of life and at the destruction of the environment.

There is joy that Van Gogh has helped me and that his example, as a Good Samaritan, is to help others. But more than anything, my new appreciation of nature told me that we need to stop being a narcissistic consumer or producer and to start helping the natural world around us. Only then can we have a legacy worthy of Vincent Van Gogh.

Anthony Padgett 05.03.2018

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